

# City of Ypsilanti Police Department



**General Order: 14-2**  
**Title: In-Car Camera/Audio**

**Date Issued:**  
**Rescinds: All Previous Memos/Orders**

**Effective Date:**

**.01 Purpose:**

Provide guidelines for the operation of In-car Audio-Visual recording equipment, to ensure the efficient operation of the system, to maintain evidential integrity, and to provide a chain of custody ensuring proper court presentation.

**.02 Policy:**

It is the policy of the Ypsilanti Police Department that the In-car video system shall be maintained and operated in compliance with the procedures contain herein. These recordings, both audio and video, are intended to enhance court testimony, assist in the preparation of reports, assist in detecting and addressing officer safety issues, and to either confirm or disprove allegations of officer misconduct. A Patrol Division Lieutenant shall be assigned to be the system administrator.

**.03 Definitions:**

**A-** Digital Recordings: Images and audio captured through the use of the in-car camera recording system, temporarily stored on the applicable system and uploaded onto the server.

**B-** Media File: Stored digital recordings.

**C-** Citizen: For the purpose of this policy is any person not employed by the City of Ypsilanti Police Department.

**.04 Considerations:**

**A-** Video and audio recordings should not be used as the sole source of information when documenting and evaluating an incident or contact with citizens. Though a powerful tool, there are limitations. Officers must be knowledgeable about the limitations of a recording system and ensure that they take steps to limit those limitations as much as possible, based on the circumstances at the time.

**B-** It is a recommended best practice that as an officer approaches a scene they should state their observations of individuals or condition of a scene. This recorded information serves several purposes:

- 1- Officer safety: would cause the officer to look around and be more aware of their surroundings.
- 2- Assist in documenting an incident. In lieu of relying solely on memory, an officer can verbally provide a great deal of detail that can be reviewed later, if needed.
- 3- In the event an officer becomes incapacitated the information provided by the officer could be of great assistance in a follow up investigation.
- 4- Description of the scene and actions of the people in the area can be of assistance in "subject resistance" investigations. Gives another source of information to review an incident from the officers' perception of the information available.
- 5- The camera does not have a 360 degree view and descriptions provided by the officer could fill in gaps in what the camera was unable to capture.

**.05 Malfunctioning Equipment:**

**A-** Once assigned a patrol unit the officer shall perform a function test/introduction at the beginning of the shift. Vehicles equipped with a recording system will not be placed in service if an officer detects there is a problem with the recording system. The officer will advise their commanding officer of the issue and will be assigned to another vehicle with a functioning system:

- 1- In the event that there is not a unit with a functional recording system a command officer may authorize the officer to use the vehicle with the malfunctioning system. If authorized to stay in the unit, the officer shall note the name of the commanding officer and the time they were advised to stay in the vehicle on their log.
- 2- Officer operating in a vehicle with an on-functioning camera must be extra cognizant that their Body Worn Camera and insure that it is activated according to and in compliance with General Order 402.
- 3- A Patrol Officer shall not make a determination to stay in a vehicle with a malfunctioning recording system.

**.06 Activation:**

**A-** The in-car camera system shall be turned on whenever an officer is making a citizen contact, related to investigative purposes:

- 1- Traffic Stops
  - 2- Dispatched runs
  - 3- Self-initiated investigations.
- B-** Casual contact with non-law enforcement personnel is not required to be recorded, however, personnel should be aware that casual contact may turn into a situation that needs to be recorded and should keep this possibility in mind.
- C-** The recording shall continue until the contact with citizens has concluded.
- D-** In situations when the officer knows that he or she will utilize the digital recording system for evidentiary purposes (i.e. Drunk Driving), the officer will attempt to position the subject(s) involved within the viewfinder of the camera in order to tape record the subject's actions and statements.
- E-** The system shall be activated while involved in or assisting with pursuit or a situation in which the officer believes the recording would be beneficial.
- F-** Officers can review recordings from inside the vehicle if needed.

**.07 Review of Recordings:**

- A-** Supervisors shall systematically review recordings for all personnel assigned to their command for the purposes of:
- 1- Verifying that the equipment is functioning properly and that personnel are adhering to proper operating procedures, providing training when needed. A monthly report of policy compliance shall be submitted to the Chief of Police by each patrol shift.
  - 2- While investigating complaints related to police operations and/or personnel.
  - 3- Reviewing incidents of subject resistance, vehicle pursuits, foot pursuits, workplace injury, employee involved traffic crash, damage to department property, etc.
- B-** Patrol Officers can review their recording to assist in preparation of reports or testimony.
- C-** Field Training Officers can review recordings of the officer they are assigned to for the purpose of training; this review will be noted on the DOR.

**.08 Additional Procedures:**

- A-** Each officer will be issued a wearable microphone for the system. Personnel operating a vehicle equipped with a recording system shall affix the audio transmitter to their person in a fashion that allows for the recording of conversations.
- B-** The officers are responsible for ensuring the microphone is charged (department provided charging / docking station).
- C-** The in-car audio video recording system is a two-camera digital audio/video recording unit, which consists of a front facing camera and a rear seat facing wide angle camera. These cameras are capable of recording separately or simultaneously.
  - 1-** An electronic file is created for each recording. Each filename contains the Department ID, the pin number of the officer utilizing the unit, the time and date of the video recording, and identifies the camera (front or rear) that recorded the video.
  - 2-** Audio/video recordings are transmitted automatically via a wireless system whenever the recording unit is within operational proximity to a receiving antenna, subsequently being uploaded to the department server.
  - 3-** The system shall self-activate when the emergency lights or siren are activated. The system can also be activated manually.
    - a-** The system "buffers" 30 seconds of video (no audio) information. Upon activation, the preceding 30 seconds will be added to the recording file.

**D- Sign On Procedure:**

- 1-** Officers are to sign into the system and activate the camera and personal microphone.
- 2-** Officers shall state their name, date, time and the shift being worked. This shall be done from outside of the vehicle to ensure the subsequent recording picked up the audio from the personal microphone and not the vehicle's interior microphone.
- 3-** Officers shall then play back the recording they just made to ensure that the system is working properly.
- 4-** Officer will classify this recording as "sign on".
- 5-** Officers are to ensure the video unit displays the correct date and time to within five minutes.
- 6-** The system will remain "powered up" when not recording.

**.09 Storage and Retention:**

- A-** All recordings uploaded from in-car camera systems will be retained on the department server in compliance with the State of Michigan retention schedule of at least 30 days. It is the responsibility of the officer to advise the Lieutenant assigned to the In-car Camera System if a recording will need to be held beyond normal retention (i.e. arrest, evidentiary value, use of force, pursuits etc.).
- B-** In-car camera recordings shall be stored on a department server, unless needed for legitimate law enforcement purposes, FOIA, Court order etc., they will not be exported from the system.
- C-** Under no circumstances is a recording to be deleted from the system.

**.10 System Access:**

- A-** Access to videos shall be limited to the following personnel with the following restrictions:
  - 1-** Full Access:
    - a-** Chief of Police
    - b-** Administrative Lieutenant
    - c-** Patrol Lieutenant/OIC of System
  - 2-** Review and Record Access:
    - a-** Lieutenants
    - b-** Sergeants
  - 3-** Review Access:
    - a-** Patrol Officers
    - b-** Detectives
- B-** Release of Videos, not related to FOIA or Subpoena.
  - 1-** Video recordings shall not be released outside the police department without prior Approval of the Chief of Police or their designee.
  - 2-** Requests from other law enforcement agencies shall be referred to the Chief of Police, where a determination will be made whether or not to release the video.
  - 3-** Video and audio recordings generated on Department equipment are and shall remain the property of the Ypsilanti Police Department.
  - 4-** The duplication or release of department video recordings for any non-law enforcement purpose is strictly prohibited without the prior approval of the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

By Order of

Anthony DeGiusti  
Chief of Police

