

Highlights

Why We Did This Audit

The City Council directed the City Auditor to conduct an audit of the body-worn camera program.

Body-worn camera (BWC) videos can be used to promote transparency, increase accountability, and discourage inappropriate behaviors by both officers and the public. Many Kansas Citians have asked the Mayor and Council for patrol officers in the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) to be outfitted with BWCs.

Objectives

- Are Kansas City, Missouri, police officers using body-worn cameras in accordance with department policies?
- What recommended practices would enhance the Kansas City, Missouri, Police Department's body-worn camera policy?

Scope Impairment

Missouri's Sunshine Law limited the videos we were able to review for this audit.

Background

Body-worn cameras is a new program for KCPD. Between November 2020 and April 2021, the department deployed BWCs to 800 officers in the six patrol divisions plus the Traffic Enforcement and Special Operations divisions.

Officers recorded nearly 325,000 BWC videos from January 2021 through August 2021.

Click [here](#) to view the full report.

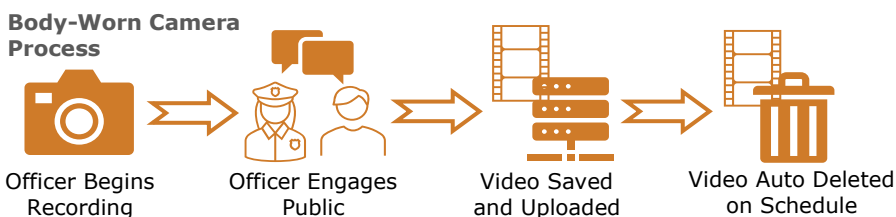
To view other audit reports, please visit our website <http://kcmo.gov/cityauditor> and click on Search Our Work.

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Police Body-Worn Camera Use Generally Follows Policy, Some Opportunities for Improvement

What We Found

The Kansas City, Missouri, Police Department's body-worn camera (BWC) program is off to a good start but has opportunities for continued improvements.



We reviewed a sample of 98 BWC videos. Almost all videos we reviewed were of good quality with unobstructed and clear video and good sound. Some videos did not capture the entire call for service or officer-initiated activity as required by the department's policy.

Officers incorrectly classified some call types or activities in the sample of body-worn camera videos we requested or viewed. Misclassified videos could be deleted before their required retention period has passed or retained longer than required by the state records retention schedule or department policy.

We compared a statistically valid sample of police dispatches in July 2021 and August 2021 to body-worn camera videos. About 20% of police dispatches did not have the expected BWC footage from responding officers.

Department policy requires officers to dock BWC's at the end of their shifts to upload videos. Between January 2021 and August 2021, about 7% of BWC's were not docked timely and videos were uploaded 24 hours or more after the videos were recorded.

Supervisors from most divisions completed quarterly reviews of videos recorded by each officer. The supervisory review should be formally added to the BWC policy. Required periodic refresher training is recommended to address issues with officers' use of the cameras and handling of the videos such as those we identified in the audit. Additionally, the department does not have formal performance goals and measures to evaluate the BWC policy or identify areas for program improvement.

What We Recommend (full list on back)

We make recommendations to clarify and strengthen the body-worn camera policy and improve recording, classification, and handling of videos and monitoring of the program.

Management agreed with the recommendations.

Recommendations

1. The Chief of Police should update the body-worn camera policy to include the specific location(s) on the body where body-worn cameras (BWCs) should be worn.
2. The Chief of Police should develop a process to assess whether officers are recording an entire call or appropriately documenting exceptions to recording an entire call.
3. The Chief of Police should update the body-worn camera policy to require officers to narrate why a recording was started after a call or interaction has begun.
4. The Chief of Police should develop a process to compare the number of dispatched calls for services and self-initiated calls to the number of videos recorded, research significant discrepancies between the two, and address causes.
5. The Chief of Police should provide additional guidance in the department's BWC policy for how officers should interpret "...shall use caution when entering...places where an individual would have a reasonable expectation of privacy."
6. The Chief of Police should replace the current default classification field in the body-worn camera system with a blank or an "unclassified" default.
7. The Chief of Police should develop a process to monitor the timeliness of BWC video uploads time.
8. The Chief of Police should update the body-worn camera policy to incorporate required supervisor reviews that at a minimum include the number of reviews required, criteria to compare videos against, and required documentation.
9. The Chief of Police should update the BWC policy to include required periodic refresher training that would address issues identified in supervisory reviews of videos or program evaluations, and changes or new information related to the BWC policy and system.
10. The Chief of Police should provide officers with refresher training related to issues identified in this audit:
 - Recording events in their entirety and properly documenting exceptions;
 - Determining which events require BWC recordings
 - Proper classification of videos
 - Timely uploading of videos
11. The Chief of Police should update the body-worn camera policy to include performance measures and goals, measuring results, and periodic public reporting of results.