

Public Safety Video Surveillance System

331.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidance for the placement and monitoring of department public safety video surveillance, as well as the storage and release of the captured images.

This policy only applies to overt, marked public safety video surveillance systems operated by the Department. It does not apply to mobile audio/video systems, covert audio/video systems or any other image-capturing devices used by the Department.

331.2 POLICY

The Syracuse Police Department operates a public safety video surveillance system to complement its anti-crime strategy, to effectively allocate and deploy personnel, and to enhance public safety and security in public areas. Cameras may be placed in strategic locations throughout the City to detect and deter crime, to help safeguard against potential threats to the public, to help manage emergency response situations during natural and man-made disasters and to assist City officials in providing services to the community.

Video surveillance in public areas will be conducted in a legal and ethical manner while recognizing and protecting constitutional standards of privacy.

331.3 OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Only department-approved video surveillance equipment shall be utilized. Members authorized to monitor video surveillance equipment should only monitor public areas and public activities where no reasonable expectation of privacy exists. The Chief of Police or the authorized designee shall approve all proposed locations for the use of video surveillance technology and should consult with and be guided by legal counsel as necessary in making such determinations.

331.3.1 PLACEMENT AND MONITORING

Use of the COPS platform:

- (a) The SPD's COPS Platform may be utilized for tasks that include, but are not limited to:
 1. Protection against, and investigation of, homeland security threats.
 2. Monitoring of SPD facilities.
 3. In emergency situations, monitoring specific public areas within the City for the purpose of enhancing public safety and detecting and deterring criminal activity.
 - (a) Viewing of COPS Platform cameras in emergency situations, other than cameras located at SPD facilities, will be granted to specific users as designated by the SPD Chief of Police or the First Deputy Chief of Police and will be based upon designated job responsibilities.
 4. Investigation of criminal activity or suspected criminal activity.

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- (b) The COPS Platform is functional twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week, unless functionality is interrupted by power, network, or mechanical failure or slowdown.

Camera placement will be guided by the underlying purpose or strategy associated with the overall video surveillance plan. As appropriate, the Chief of Police should confer with other affected City divisions and designated community groups when evaluating camera placement. Environmental factors, including lighting, location of buildings, presence of vegetation or other obstructions, should also be evaluated when determining placement.

Cameras shall only record video images and not sound. Recorded images may be used for a variety of purposes, including criminal investigations and monitoring of activity around high-value or high-threat areas. The public safety video surveillance system may be useful for the following purposes:

- (a) To prevent, deter and identify criminal activity.
- (b) To target identified areas of gang and narcotics complaints or activity.
- (c) To respond to critical incidents.
- (d) To assist in identifying, apprehending and prosecuting offenders.
- (e) To document officer and offender conduct during interactions to safeguard the rights of the public and officers.
- (f) To augment resources in a cost-effective manner.
- (g) To monitor pedestrian and vehicle traffic activity.
- (h) To monitor critical infrastructure.

Images from each camera should be recorded in a manner consistent with the underlying purpose of the particular camera. When activity warranting further investigation is reported or detected at any camera location, the available information should be provided to responding officers in a timely manner.

The Chief of Police may authorize video feeds from the public safety video surveillance system to be forwarded to a specified location for monitoring by other than police personnel, such as allied government and private agencies.

Unauthorized recording, viewing, reproduction, dissemination or retention of anything documented by public safety surveillance equipment is prohibited.

331.3.2 CAMERA MARKINGS

All public areas monitored by public safety surveillance equipment shall be marked in a conspicuous manner.

331.3.3 INTEGRATION WITH OTHER TECHNOLOGY

The Department may elect to integrate its public safety video surveillance system with other technology to enhance available information.

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The Department should evaluate the availability and propriety of networking or otherwise collaborating with appropriate private sector entities and should evaluate whether the use of certain camera systems, such as pan-tilt-zoom systems, video enhancement or other analytical technology, requires additional safeguards.

331.4 VIDEO SUPERVISION

Supervisors should monitor video surveillance access and usage to ensure members follow department policy and applicable laws. Supervisors should ensure such use and access is appropriately documented.

331.4.1 VIDEO LOG

An electronic log shall be maintained on the Department's network. The log should be used to document all persons not assigned to the monitoring locations who have been given access to view or monitor images provided by the video surveillance cameras.

331.4.2 PROHIBITED ACTIVITY

Public safety video surveillance systems will not intentionally be used to invade the privacy of individuals or observe areas where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists.

Public safety video surveillance equipment shall not be used in an unequal or discriminatory manner and shall not target individuals or groups based solely on actual or perceived characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, economic status, age, cultural group, or disability.

Video surveillance equipment shall not be used to harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.

The COPS Platform cameras will not be used solely for the purpose of identifying and/or documenting the identity of individuals who are engaging in lawful public protest and/or dissent.

COPS Platform cameras will not be utilized for illegitimate purposes.

Unauthorized use or misuse of the COPS Platform will result in disciplinary action and may subject the wrongdoer to criminal or civil liability.

331.5 STORAGE AND RETENTION OF MEDIA

Video footage will be stored on a server specifically designated for the COPS Platform. The server will be situated in a secure area with other SPD computer network servers. Only designated personnel in the SPD Division of Technology & Program Management will have access to this secure area.

Video footage will be stored for a period of thirty (30) days or less, depending upon the storage capacity of the server. The server will perform automatic deletions of the oldest archived footage when the server's storage capacity is full or the thirty day retention period has been reached.

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A recording needed as evidence shall be copied to a suitable medium and booked into evidence in accordance with established evidence procedures. All actions taken with respect to retention of media shall be appropriately documented.

The type of video surveillance technology employed and the manner in which recordings are used and stored will affect retention periods. The recordings should be stored and retained in accordance with the established records retention schedule.

No video footage will be retained past the thirty (30) day retention period without prior approval of the SPD Chief of Police or his or her designee.

[See procedure for STORAGE OF ARCHIVED VIDEO FOOTAGE/REQUESTS FOR COPIES OF COPS PLATFORM VIDEO](#)

331.5.1 EVIDENTIARY INTEGRITY

All downloaded and retained media shall be treated in the same manner as other evidence. Media shall be accessed, maintained, stored and retrieved in a manner that ensures its integrity as evidence, including strict adherence to chain of custody requirements. Electronic trails, including encryption, digital masking of innocent or uninvolved individuals to preserve anonymity, authenticity certificates and date and time stamping shall be used as appropriate to preserve individual rights and to ensure the authenticity and maintenance of a secure evidentiary chain of custody.

331.6 RELEASE OF VIDEO IMAGES

All recorded video images gathered by the public safety video surveillance equipment are for the official use of the Syracuse Police Department.

Requests for recorded video images from the public or the media shall be processed in the same manner as requests for department public records.

Requests for recorded images from other law enforcement agencies shall be referred to the Chief's Office for release in accordance with a specific and legitimate law enforcement purpose.

Recorded video images that are the subject of a court order or subpoena shall be processed in accordance with the established department subpoena process.

331.7 VIDEO SURVEILLANCE AUDIT

Audits will be conducted periodically by the Technology and Program Management Division for compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and SPD Rules and Regulations governing operating procedures of the COPS Platform. Auditors will review and assess :

- (a) That only authorized personnel have accessed the COPS Platform.
- (b) The evaluation of incidents and camera locations.
- (c) Any public safety issues that were effectively addressed or any significant prosecutions that resulted.
- (d) Systemic operational or administrative issues that were identified.

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- (e) Any recommendations for training or policy should be promptly addressed.

331.8 TRAINING

All department members authorized to operate or access public safety video surveillance systems shall receive appropriate training. Training should include guidance on the use of cameras, interaction with dispatch and patrol operations and a review regarding relevant policies and procedures, including this policy. Training should also address state and federal law related to the use of video surveillance equipment and privacy.

331.9 MAINTENANCE / SUPPORT OF THE COPS PLATFORM

Maintenance of the COPS Platform will be the responsibility of designated SPD Division of Technology & Program Management personnel.

- (a) Maintenance will include, but may not be limited to:

1. Camera equipment function checks.
2. Camera housing integrity and condition checks.
3. Camera software function checks.
4. Archived images quality checks.

SPD Division of Technology & Program Management personnel will perform weekly checks of the COPS Platform to ensure that all equipment is functioning properly.

Off-hours requests for downed COPS footage can be facilitated through the Department's IT on-call number (315-549-2143).

In the event that a camera falls off a pole (e.g. 79), the responding officer shall ensure that the camera is recovered and shall notify the Technology & Program Management Division.