

Mobile Video Recorders

421.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Freeborn County Sheriff's Office has equipped marked patrol cars with Mobile Video Recording (MVR) systems to provide records of events and assist deputies in the performance of their duties. This policy provides guidance on the use of these systems.

421.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Activate - Any process that causes the MVR system to transmit or store video or audio data in an active mode.

In-car camera system and Mobile Video Recorder (MVR) - Synonymous terms - that refer to any system that captures audio and video signals that is capable of installation in a vehicle and that includes at minimum, a camera, microphone, recorder and monitor.

Law Enforcement Operator (LEO) - Primarily a licensed peace officer but on occasion may be a non-licensed representative of the Office who is authorized and assigned to operate MVR-equipped vehicles to the extent consistent with Minn. Stat. § 169.98.

MGDPA - The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13.

MVR technician - Personnel certified or trained in the operational use and repair of MVRs, duplicating methods, storage and retrieval methods and procedures, and who possess a working knowledge of video forensics and evidentiary procedures.

Recorded media - Audio-video signals recorded or digitally stored on a storage device or portable media.

421.2 POLICY

It is the goal of the Freeborn County Sheriff's Office to use mobile video recorder (MVR) technology to more effectively fulfill the office's mission and to ensure these systems are used securely and efficiently.

421.3 DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES

Prior to going into service each deputy will properly equip him/herself to record audio and video in the field. At the end of the shift each deputy will follow the established procedures for providing to the Office any recordings or used media and any other related equipment. Each deputy should have adequate recording media for the entire duty assignment. In the event a deputy works at a remote location and reports in only periodically additional recording media may be issued. Only Freeborn County Sheriff's Office identified and labeled media with tracking numbers is to be used.

At the start of each shift, deputies should test the MVR system operation in accordance with manufacturer specifications and office operating procedures and training.

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System documentation is accomplished by the deputy recording his/her name, serial number, badge, or PIN number and the current date and time at the start and again at the end of each shift. If the system is malfunctioning, the deputy shall take the vehicle out of service unless a supervisor requests the vehicle remain in service.

421.4 ACTIVATION OF THE MVR

The MVR system is designed to turn on whenever the unit's emergency lights are activated. The system remains on until it is turned off manually. The audio portion is independently controlled and should be activated manually by the deputy whenever appropriate. When audio is being recorded the video will also record.

Operators are encouraged to narrate events using the audio recording so as to provide the best documentation for pretrial and courtroom presentation.

421.4.1 REQUIRED ACTIVATION OF THE MVR

This policy is not intended to describe every possible situation in which the MVR system may be used, although there are many situations where its use is appropriate. A deputy may activate the system any time the deputy believes its use would be appropriate and/or valuable to document an incident.

In some circumstances it is not possible to capture images of the incident due to conditions or the location of the camera. However the audio portion can be valuable evidence and is subject to the same activation requirements as the MVR. The MVR system should be activated in any of the following situations:

- (a) All field contacts involving actual or potential criminal conduct within video or audio range:
 - 1. Traffic stops (to include, but not limited to, traffic violations, stranded motorist assistance and all crime interdiction stops)
 - 2. Priority responses
 - 3. Vehicle pursuits
 - 4. Suspicious vehicles
 - 5. Arrests
 - 6. Vehicle searches
 - 7. Physical or verbal confrontations or use of force
 - 8. Prisoner transports
 - 9. Non-custody transports
 - 10. Pedestrian checks
 - 11. DWI investigations including field sobriety tests
 - 12. Consensual encounters
 - 13. Crimes in progress

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14. Responding to an in-progress call
15. Medical incidents attended to by members of the Office
- (b) All self-initiated activity in which a deputy would normally notify Dispatch
- (c) Any call for service involving a crime where the recorder may aid in the apprehension and/or prosecution of a suspect:
 1. Family violence calls
 2. Disturbance of peace calls
 3. Offenses involving violence or weapons
- (d) Any other contact that becomes adversarial after the initial contact, in a situation that would not otherwise require recording
- (e) Any other circumstance where the deputy believes that a recording of an incident would be appropriate

421.4.2 CESSATION OF RECORDING

Once activated the MVR system should remain on until the incident has concluded. For purposes of this section conclusion of an incident has occurred when all arrests have been made, arrestees have been transported and all witnesses and victims have been interviewed. Recording may cease if a deputy is simply waiting for a tow truck or a family member to arrive, or in other similar situations.

421.4.3 WHEN ACTIVATION IS NOT REQUIRED

Activation of the MVR system is not required when exchanging information with other deputies or during breaks, lunch periods, when not in service or actively on patrol.

No member of this office may surreptitiously use County equipment to record a conversation of any other member of this office except with a court order or when lawfully authorized by the Sheriff or the authorized designee for the purpose of conducting a criminal or administrative investigation.

421.4.4 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors should determine if vehicles with non-functioning MVR systems should be placed into service. If these vehicles are placed into service, the appropriate documentation should be made, including notification of Dispatch.

At reasonable intervals, supervisors should validate that:

- (a) Beginning and end-of-shift recording procedures are followed.
- (b) Logs reflect the proper chain of custody, including:
 1. The tracking number of the MVR system media.
 2. The date it was issued.
 3. The law enforcement operator or the vehicle to which it was issued.
 4. The date it was submitted.

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5. Law enforcement operators submitting the media.
 6. Holds for evidence indication and tagging as required.
- (c) The operation of MVR systems by new employees is assessed and reviewed no less than biweekly.

When an incident arises that requires the immediate retrieval of the recorded media (e.g., serious crime scenes, peace officer-involved shootings, office-involved collisions), a supervisor shall respond to the scene and ensure that the appropriate supervisor, MVR technician or crime scene investigator properly retrieves the recorded media. The media may need to be treated as evidence and should be handled in accordance with current evidence procedures for recorded media. Copies may be distributed to investigators as appropriate to the investigation.

Supervisors may activate the MVR system remotely to monitor a developing situation such as a chase, riot or an event that may threaten public safety, officer safety or both, when the purpose is to obtain tactical information to assist in managing the event.

421.5 REVIEW OF MVR RECORDINGS

All recording media, recorded images and audio recordings are the property of the agency and subject to the provisions of the MGDPA. Dissemination outside of the agency is strictly prohibited except to the extent permitted or required under the MGDPA, Peace Officer Disciplinary Procedures Act or other applicable law.

To prevent damage to, or alteration of, the original recorded media, it shall not be copied, viewed or otherwise inserted into any device not approved by the office MVR technician or forensic media staff. When reasonably possible a copy of the original media shall be used for viewing (unless otherwise directed by the courts) to preserve the original media.

Recordings may be reviewed in any of the following situations.

- (a) For use when preparing reports or statements
- (b) By a supervisor investigating a specific act of deputy conduct
- (c) By a supervisor to assess deputy performance
- (d) To assess proper functioning of MVR systems
- (e) By office investigators, after approval of a supervisor, who are participating in an official investigation such as a personnel complaint, administrative inquiry or a criminal investigation
- (f) By office personnel who request to review recordings
- (g) By a deputy who is captured on or referenced in the video or audio data and reviews and uses the data for any purpose relating to his/her employment
- (h) By court personnel through proper process or with permission of the Sheriff or the authorized designee
- (i) By the media through proper process or with an MGDPA request (Minn. Stat. § 13.01 et seq.)

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- (j) To assess possible training value
- (k) Recordings may be shown for staff or public safety training purposes. If an involved deputy objects to showing a recording, his/her objection will be submitted to the staff to determine if the training value outweighs the deputy's objection

Employees desiring to view any previously uploaded or archived MVR recording should submit a request in writing to the Patrol Sergeant. Approved requests should be forwarded to the MVR technician for processing.

In no event shall any recording be used or shown for the purpose of ridiculing or embarrassing any employee.

421.6 DOCUMENTING MVR USE

If any incident is recorded with either the video or audio system, the existence of that recording shall be documented in the deputy's report. If a citation is issued, the deputy shall make a notation on the records copy of the citation indicating that the incident was recorded.

421.7 RECORDING MEDIA STORAGE AND INTEGRITY

Once submitted for storage all recording media will be labeled and stored in a designated secure area. All recording media that is not booked in as evidence will be retained for a minimum of 180 days and disposed of in compliance with the established records retention schedule.

421.7.1 COPIES OF ORIGINAL RECORDING MEDIA

Original recording media shall not be used for any purpose other than for initial review by a supervisor. Upon proper request a copy of the original recording media will be made for use as authorized in this policy.

Original recording media may only be released in response to a court order or upon approval by the Sheriff or the authorized designee. In the event an original recording is released to a court a copy shall be made and placed in storage until the original is returned.

421.7.2 MVR RECORDINGS AS EVIDENCE

Deputies who reasonably believe that an MVR recording is likely to contain evidence relevant to a criminal offense, potential claim against the deputy or against the Freeborn County Sheriff's Office should indicate this in an appropriate report. Deputies should ensure relevant recordings are preserved.

421.8 SYSTEM OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

- (a) MVR system vehicle installations should be based on officer safety requirements and vehicle and device manufacturer recommendations.
- (b) The MVR system should be configured to minimally record for 30 seconds prior to an event.
- (c) The MVR system may not be configured to record audio data occurring prior to activation.

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- (d) To prevent bleed-over and/or noise from other MVRs in systems using low band transmitters (analog) only the primary LEO initiating the contact shall activate his/her audio recorder.
- (e) LEOs using digital transmitters that are individually synchronized to their individual MVR shall activate both audio and video recordings when responding in a support capacity in order to obtain additional perspectives of the incident scene.
- (f) With the exception of law enforcement radios or other emergency equipment other electronic devices should not be used within the law enforcement vehicle in order to intentionally interfere with the capability of the MVR system to record audio data.
- (g) LEOs shall not erase, alter, reuse, modify or tamper with MVR recordings. Only a supervisor, MVR technician or other approved designee may erase and reissue previously recorded recordings and may only do so pursuant to the provisions of this policy.
- (h) To prevent damage original recordings shall not be viewed on any equipment other than the equipment issued or authorized by the MVR technician.

421.9 MVR TECHNICIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

The MVR technician is responsible for:

- (a) Ordering, issuing, retrieving, storing, erasing and duplicating of all recorded media.
- (b) Collecting all completed media for oversight and verification of wireless downloaded media. Once collected the MVR technician:
 - 1. Ensures it is stored in a secured location with authorized controlled access.
 - 2. Makes appropriate entries in the chain of custody log.
- (c) Erasing of media:
 - 1. Pursuant to a court order.
 - 2. In accordance with established records retention policies, including reissuing all other media deemed to be of no evidentiary value.
- (d) Assigning all media an identification number prior to issuance to the field.
 - 1. Maintaining a record of issued media.
- (e) Ensuring that an adequate supply of recording media is available.
- (f) Managing the long-term storage of media that has been deemed to be of evidentiary value in accordance with the office evidence storage protocols and the records retention schedule.

421.10 TRAINING

Users of the MVR systems and supervisors shall successfully complete an approved course of instruction prior to being deployed with MVR systems in operational settings.

Portable Audio/Video Recorders

423.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for the use of portable audio/video recording devices by members of this office while in the performance of their duties (Minn. Stat. § 626.8473). Portable audio/video recording devices include all recording systems whether body-worn, hand-held, or integrated into portable equipment.

This policy does not apply to mobile audio/video recordings, interviews, or interrogations conducted at any Freeborn County Sheriff's Office facility, undercover operations, wiretaps, or eavesdropping (concealed listening devices).

423.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Portable recording system - A device worn by a member that is capable of both video and audio recording of the member's activities and interactions with others or collecting digital multimedia evidence as part of an investigation and as provided in Minn. Stat. § 13.825.

423.2 POLICY

The Freeborn County Sheriff's Office may provide members with access to portable recorders for use during the performance of their duties. The use of recorders is intended to enhance the mission of the Office by accurately capturing contacts between members of the Office and the public.

423.3 COORDINATOR

The Sheriff or the authorized designee should designate a coordinator responsible for (Minn. Stat. § 626.8473; Minn. Stat. § 13.825):

- (a) Establishing procedures for the security, storage, and maintenance of data and recordings.
 1. The coordinator should work with the Custodian of Records and the member assigned to coordinate the use, access, and release of protected information to ensure that procedures comply with requirements of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA) and other applicable laws (Minn. Stat. § 13.01 et seq.) (see the Protected Information and the Records Maintenance and Release policies).
 2. The coordinator should work with the Custodian of Records to identify recordings that must be retained for a specific time frame under Minnesota law (e.g., firearm discharges, certain use of force incidents, formal complaints).
- (b) Establishing procedures for accessing data and recordings.
 1. These procedures should include the process to obtain written authorization for access to non-public data by FCSO members and members of other governmental entities and agencies.
- (c) Establishing procedures for logging or auditing access.

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- (d) Establishing procedures for transferring, downloading, tagging, or marking events.
- (e) Establishing an inventory of portable recorders including:
 1. Total number of devices owned or maintained by the Freeborn County Sheriff's Office.
 2. Daily record of the total number deployed and used by members and, if applicable, the precinct or district in which the devices were used.
 3. Total amount of recorded audio and video data collected by the devices and maintained by the Freeborn County Sheriff's Office.
- (f) Preparing the biennial audit required by Minn. Stat. § 13.825, Subd. 9.
- (g) Notifying the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) in a timely manner when new equipment is obtained by the Freeborn County Sheriff's Office that expands the type or scope of surveillance capabilities of the office's portable recorders.
- (h) Ensuring that this Portable Audio/Video Recorders Policy is posted on the Office website.

423.4 MEMBER PRIVACY EXPECTATION

All recordings made by members on any office-issued device at any time or while acting in an official capacity of this office, regardless of ownership of the device, shall remain the property of the Office. Members shall have no expectation of privacy or ownership interest in the content of these recordings.

423.5 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Prior to going into service, each uniformed member will be responsible for making sure that he/she is equipped with a portable recorder issued by the Office, and that the recorder is in good working order (Minn. Stat. § 13.825). If the recorder is not in working order or the member becomes aware of a malfunction at any time, the member shall promptly report the failure to his/her supervisor and obtain a functioning device as soon as reasonably practicable. Uniformed members should wear the recorder in a conspicuous manner or otherwise notify persons that they are being recorded, whenever reasonably practicable (Minn. Stat. § 626.8473).

Any member assigned to a non-uniformed position may carry an approved portable recorder at any time the member believes that such a device may be useful. Unless conducting a lawful recording in an authorized undercover capacity, non-uniformed members should wear the recorder in a conspicuous manner when in use or otherwise notify persons that they are being recorded, whenever reasonably practicable.

When using a portable recorder, the assigned member shall record his/her name, employee number and the current date and time at the beginning and the end of the shift or other period of use, regardless of whether any activity was recorded. This procedure is not required when the recording device and related software captures the user's unique identification and the date and time of each recording.

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Members should document the existence of a recording in any report or other official record of the contact, including any instance where the recorder malfunctioned or the member deactivated the recording (Minn. Stat. § 626.8473). Members should include the reason for deactivation.

423.6 ACTIVATION OF THE AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDER

This policy is not intended to describe every possible situation in which the recorder should be used, although there are many situations where its use is appropriate. Members should activate the recorder any time the member believes it would be appropriate or valuable to record an incident.

The recorder should be activated in any of the following situations:

- (a) All enforcement and investigative contacts including stops and field interview (FI) situations
- (b) Traffic stops including, but not limited to, traffic violations, stranded motorist assistance and all crime interdiction stops
- (c) Self-initiated activity in which a member would normally notify Dispatch
- (d) Any other contact that becomes adversarial after the initial contact in a situation that would not otherwise require recording

Members should remain sensitive to the dignity of all individuals being recorded and exercise sound discretion to respect privacy by discontinuing recording whenever it reasonably appears to the member that such privacy may outweigh any legitimate law enforcement interest in recording. Requests by members of the public to stop recording should be considered using this same criterion. Recording should resume when privacy is no longer at issue unless the circumstances no longer fit the criteria for recording.

At no time is a member expected to jeopardize his/her safety in order to activate a portable recorder or change the recording media. However, the recorder should be activated in situations described above as soon as reasonably practicable.

423.6.1 CESSATION OF RECORDING

Once activated, the portable recorder should remain on continuously until the member reasonably believes that his/her direct participation in the incident is complete or the situation no longer fits the criteria for activation. Recording may be stopped during significant periods of inactivity such as report writing or other breaks from direct participation in the incident.

423.6.2 SURREPTITIOUS RECORDINGS

Minnesota law permits an individual to surreptitiously record any conversation in which one party to the conversation has given his/her permission (Minn. Stat. § 626A.02).

Members of the Office may surreptitiously record any conversation during the course of a criminal investigation in which the member reasonably believes that such a recording will be lawful and beneficial to the investigation.

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Members shall not surreptitiously record another office member without a court order unless lawfully authorized by the Sheriff or the authorized designee.

423.6.3 EXPLOSIVE DEVICE

Many portable recorders, including body-worn cameras and audio/video transmitters, emit radio waves that could trigger an explosive device. Therefore, these devices should not be used where an explosive device may be present.

423.7 PROHIBITED USE OF AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDERS

Members are prohibited from using office-issued portable recorders and recording media for personal use and are prohibited from making personal copies of recordings created while on-duty or while acting in their official capacity.

Members are also prohibited from retaining recordings of activities or information obtained while on-duty, whether the recording was created with office-issued or personally owned recorders. Members shall not duplicate or distribute such recordings, except for authorized legitimate office business purposes. All such recordings shall be retained at the Office.

Members are prohibited from using personally owned recording devices while on-duty without the express consent of the Patrol Sergeant. Any member who uses a personally owned recorder for office-related activities shall comply with the provisions of this policy, including retention and release requirements and should notify the on-duty supervisor of such use as soon as reasonably practicable.

Recordings shall not be used by any member for the purpose of embarrassment, harassment or ridicule.

423.8 RETENTION OF RECORDINGS

All recordings shall be retained for a period consistent with the requirements of the organization's records retention schedule but in no event for a period less than 180 days.

If an individual captured in a recording submits a written request, the recording shall be retained for an additional time period. The coordinator should be responsible for notifying the individual prior to destruction of the recording (Minn. Stat. § 13.825).

423.8.1 RELEASE OF AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDINGS

Requests for the release of audio/video recordings shall be processed in accordance with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.

423.8.2 ACCESS TO RECORDINGS

Except as provided by Minn. Stat. § 13.825, Subd. 2, audio/video recordings are considered private or nonpublic data.

Any person captured in a recording may have access to the recording. If the individual requests a copy of the recording and does not have the consent of other non-law enforcement individuals captured on the recording, the identity of those individuals must be blurred or obscured sufficiently

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to render the subject unidentifiable prior to release. The identity of on-duty peace officers may not be obscured unless their identity is protected under Minn. Stat. § 13.82, Subd. 17.

423.9 IDENTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION OF RECORDINGS

To assist with identifying and preserving data and recordings, members should download, tag or mark the recordings in accordance with procedure and document the existence of the recording in any related case report.

A member should transfer, tag or mark recordings when the member reasonably believes:

- (a) The recording contains evidence relevant to potential criminal, civil or administrative matters.
- (b) A complainant, victim or witness has requested non-disclosure.
- (c) A complainant, victim or witness has not requested non-disclosure but the disclosure of the recording may endanger the person.
- (d) Disclosure may be an unreasonable violation of someone's privacy.
- (e) Medical or mental health information is contained.
- (f) Disclosure may compromise an under-cover officer or confidential informant.
- (g) The recording or portions of the recording may be protected under the Minnesota Data Practices Act.

Any time a member reasonably believes a recorded contact may be beneficial in a non-criminal matter (e.g., a hostile contact), the member should promptly notify a supervisor of the existence of the recording.

423.10 REVIEW OF RECORDED MEDIA FILES

When preparing written reports, members should review their recordings as a resource (see the Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths Policy for guidance in those cases). However, members shall not retain personal copies of recordings. Members should not use the fact that a recording was made as a reason to write a less detailed report.

Supervisors are authorized to review relevant recordings any time they are investigating alleged misconduct or reports of meritorious conduct or whenever such recordings would be beneficial in reviewing the member's performance.

Recorded files may also be reviewed:

- (a) By a supervisor as part of internal audits and reviews as required by Minn. Stat. § 626.8473.
- (b) Upon approval by a supervisor, by any member of the Office who is participating in an official investigation, such as a personnel complaint, administrative investigation, or criminal investigation.
- (c) Pursuant to lawful process or by court personnel who are otherwise authorized to review evidence in a related case.

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- (d) By media personnel with permission of the Sheriff or the authorized designee.
- (e) In compliance with the Minnesota Data Practices Act request, if permitted or required by the Act, including pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 13.82, Subd. 15, and in accordance with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.

All recordings should be reviewed by the Custodian of Records prior to public release (see the Records Maintenance and Release Policy). Recordings that are clearly offensive to common sensibilities should not be publicly released unless disclosure is required by law or order of the court (Minn. Stat. § 13.82, Subd. 7; Minn. Stat. § 13.825, Subd. 2).

423.11 ACCOUNTABILITY

Any member who accesses or releases recordings without authorization may be subject to discipline (see the Standards of Conduct and the Protected Information policies) (Minn. Stat. § 626.8473).