

Body Worn Camera Systems

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The introduction of body-worn camera (BWC) technology into the law enforcement profession is a uniquely Southern California phenomenon. While the technology was being refined, a forward-thinking local Chief of Police had the vision to consider using the BWC to address his operational and community service concerns.

Effectiveness of Body-Worn Cameras

In 2012 the Chief of Police of the Rialto Police Department was faced with precipitously high incidents of community member complaints and use of force (UOF) incidents. In an effort to gauge the potential impact(s) on complaints and UOF incidents involving police officers, the Chief collaborated with two academic researchers and conduct a randomized study wherein some officers were directed to wear a BWC during their entire shift. Additionally, officers who were wearing the devices were required to inform contacted community members that they were being recorded. The results of the study were remarkable. On those shifts where officers were deploying BWC's, use of force incidents dropped by 50 percent. Complaints by community members against officers who wore the devices dropped to almost zero in the 12 months following the introduction of the body-worn cameras.

Ten years after the Rialto study, the use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement officers has spread internationally. However, not all law enforcement agencies in the United States have adopted the technology.

Use of Body-Worn Cameras

In November 2018, the Bureau of Justice Statistics published a report on the use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement agencies in the United States in 2016. That research showed that 47% of general-purpose law enforcement agencies had acquired body-worn cameras; for large police departments, that number was 80%. Police agencies that had not acquired body-worn cameras cited hardware acquisition cost, video storage, and system maintenance to be the

primary reasons that they had not deployed the technology. However, given the potential of having to settle a UOF lawsuit that could average one million dollars and wipe out the operating budget of a small police agency, the investment in BWC technology may be more appealing to some agencies.

The following college police agencies are using Body-Worn Camera systems:

1. Cal Poly Pomona
2. Cal State Fullerton
3. Cal State Los Angeles
4. Chaffey Community College
5. UC Riverside
6. Riverside Community College
7. Glendale Community College
8. Cal State Long Beach
9. Long Beach City College

The following college police agencies are not using a Body-Worn Camera system:

1. Pasadena Community College
2. Citrus Community College
3. Fullerton Community College
4. Orange Coast College

Cost of Body-Worn Camera System (excluding Cloud Storage)

There are two components of a body-worn camera system: hardware and licensing. Hardware is the component that facilitates the recording of officer contacts while licensing addresses the storage, security, and retention capabilities. There are higher-priced systems available that will provide a higher-level quality product, while lower-priced systems deliver a lower-quality product with compromised access and security concerns.