



UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF POLICE SERVICES

“Service with Distinction”
Lianne M. Tuomey, Chief of Police

What's new at UVM Police for 2015

Vest Carriers:

You will notice many of our patrol officers are wearing a black external vest this year. This vest is a carrier system that is the result of 20 years of research into officer wellness and injury reduction. The intent of this carrier is two-fold:

- To have a way to carry the protective ballistic panels that all Police Services officers are required to wear while in uniform and on duty while providing officers a way to stay comfortable. Prior to this year officers wore their ballistic vests under the green uniform shirt. It was very difficult to get cool air to the core of the officer's body. The external vest allows the officers to remove the vest while in the office, and put it on quickly should the need arise.
- To relieve stress on the officers back and hips. The weight of the equipment officers have traditionally carried on their duty belt is in excess of 15 lbs. Ergonomic studies have suggested that removing weight from around the waist reduces stress on the lower back, especially when sitting. The external carriers allow for the redistribution of weight and improved long-term health of the officers.

Body Worn Cameras:

For several years, UVM-Police Services has been testing and evaluating “body worn camera” (BWC) devices. The goal has been to see if BWC will improve officer efficiency and effectiveness, as well as increase our transparency. We (both management and the officers themselves) have concluded moving forward with this effort is a win-win for everyone involved.

As a result of this evaluation process, as well as the documented success of BWC systems in other communities, the department planned to institute use of these devices during this (2016) fiscal year.

UVM Police worked with best practice subject matter experts nationally to develop a solid departmental policy, an officer training program, as well as a procedure for managing the media collected.

The importance of UVM-PS's incorporating body-worn cameras into its public safety activities has been a priority for several years. Nationwide, not only is it hoped that these types of systems will lead to greater officer safety, but they are rapidly becoming an important feature in policing to improve police-community relations. UVM-PS believes that our use of the BWC will further advance our positive reputation by continuing to grow the public trust in and engagement with our outstanding police department. The members of the UVM community, our guests, and all persons coming into contact with our Police Services as well as the dedicated officers deserve no less.

A recent *International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators* (IACLEA) survey concluded that campuses across the country are finding great benefit in the use of BWC:

- Enhanced public trust;
- Enhanced officer safety;
- Preservation of visual and audio information for use in current and future investigations;

- Documentation of crime or incident scenes;
- Enhanced officer ability to document and review statements and actions for reporting purposes and criminal prosecution;
- Serve as a tool for officer training.

At UVM Police Services, we expect that the use of these systems will evolve over time and with experience. Officers will be turning the cameras on for events such as:

- Any call for service
- Officer initiated contacts
- Any report of a crime or active incident (such as a fight or disturbance) in progress;
- Arrests and investigative detentions;
- Traffic stops and pursuits;
- Searches;
- Mental health calls or any other incidents where a person is presenting an altered mental status; and
- Events and incidents reasonably foreseeable to be confrontational such as: citizen contacts, interactions with aggressive subjects, and responses to resistance/uses of force (factors in determining that they are foreseeable include, but are not limited to, initial reports, subject actions upon arrival, and prior history with a subject or location).

Examples of when officers will generally not activate the cameras include: personal time (breaks, meals, etc.), committee meetings, officer provided training for the campus community, conversations with other officers, supervisors or other University officials, or in other general community engagement activities.

Inside a residence hall room or other legally protected space, absent exigent circumstances, it is required that officers advise those present that a recording is being captured. In other settings, when feasible, officers are trained to inform individuals that they are being recorded whenever possible.

The current technology does not allow the camera system to record for a full 10 hour shift, and video storage technology/cost would make it prohibitive to store 10 hours of video per day for every officer. Cameras will have a 30 second pre-activation capture and officers will be trained in the facets of the system.

Additional information governing the use of body worn cameras is included in department policy and is available for public viewing on our website at: http://www.uvm.edu/police/news/2015-09-14bwc_policy.pdf.