
Portable Audio/Video Recorders

424.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for the use of portable audio/video recording devices by members of this department while in the performance of their duties. 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 lawful surreptitious audio/video recording, interception of communications for authorized investigative purposes or to mobile audio/video recordings (see the Investigation and Prosecution and Mobile Audio/Video policies).

424.2 POLICY

The Norman Police Department may provide members with access to portable recorders, either audio or video or both, for use during the performance of their duties. The use of recorders is intended to enhance the mission of the Department by accurately capturing contacts between members of the Department and the public.

424.3 MEMBER PRIVACY EXPECTATION

All recordings made by members acting in an official capacity of this department shall remain the property of the Department regardless of whether those recordings were made with department-issued or personally owned recorders. Members shall have no expectation of privacy or ownership interest in the content of these recordings.

424.4 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Prior to going into service, if available, each uniformed member will be responsible for making sure that he/she is equipped with a portable recorder, issued by the Department, and that the recorder is in good working order. If the recorder is not in working order or malfunctions at any time, the member shall promptly report the failure to his/her supervisor and obtain a functioning device as soon as practicable.

When using a recorder, the uniformed member shall record his/her name, NPD identification 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.

All 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 de-activated the recording. Members should include the reason for de-activation.

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424.5 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 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 an officer would normally notify Communications Division
- (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 practicable.

424.5.1 CESSATION OF RECORDING

Once activated, the portable recorder should remain on continuously until the member's 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.

424.5.2 SURREPTITIOUS USE OF THE AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDER

Oklahoma law permits an individual to surreptitiously record any conversation in which one party to the conversation has given his/her permission (13 O.S. § 176.4).

Members 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.

Members shall not surreptitiously record another department member without a court order unless lawfully authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

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424.5.3 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.

424.6 PROHIBITED USE OF PORTABLE RECORDERS

Members are prohibited from using department-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 an official capacity.

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

Members are prohibited from using personally owned recording devices while on-duty without the express consent of the Watch Commander. Any member who uses a personally owned recorder for department-related activities shall comply with the provisions of this policy, including retention and release requirements.

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

424.7 RETENTION OF RECORDINGS

Any time a member records any portion of a contact that the member reasonably believes constitutes evidence in a criminal case, the member shall record the related case number and transfer the file in accordance with current procedure for storing digital files and document the existence of the recording in the related case report. Transfers should occur at the end of the member's shift, or any time the storage capacity is nearing its limit.

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.

424.7.1 RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

All recordings shall be retained for a period consistent with the requirements of the established records retention schedule but in no event for a period less than 90 days.

Members who believe a recording may be of value to the Department for training should notify their supervisor. Upon review, the supervisor may forward the request to the Staff Services Division Commander who will determine if the recording should be retained for such purposes. If an involved employee objects to using the recording for department training needs, the employee should submit his/her objection to the Chief of Police for a final determination.

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424.8 REVIEW OF RECORDED MEDIA FILES

When preparing written reports, members should review their recordings as a resource. 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 a member's performance.

Recorded files may also be reviewed:

- (a) Upon approval by a supervisor, by any member of the Department who is participating in an official investigation, such as a personnel complaint, administrative investigation or criminal investigation.
- (b) Pursuant to lawful process or by court personnel who are otherwise authorized to review evidence in a related case.
- (c) By media personnel with permission of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.
- (d) When the recording was made as part of a field training session and the review is needed as part of the training process. Retention or use beyond the original training session should be requested following the established procedure for securing recordings for training needs.
- (e) In compliance with a public records request, provided that all recordings should be reviewed by the Custodian of Records prior to public release (see the Records Maintenance and Release Policy). Recorded files released in compliance with a public records request (51 O.S. § 24A.8):
 1. Shall only be released after redaction or obscuring of specific portions of the recording that:
 - (a) Depict the death of a person or a dead body.
 - (b) Depict any person who is nude.
 - (c) Identify minors under 16 years of age.
 2. May have redaction or obscuring of specific portions of audio and video that reveal the identity of officers who become subject to internal investigation by the Department until the investigation has been concluded. After conclusion of the investigation and any disciplinary process, the unedited audio and video recordings shall be available for public inspection and copying. The unedited audio and video recordings shall be available for public inspection and copying before the conclusion of the investigation and disciplinary process if the investigation and disciplinary process lasts for an unreasonable amount of time.

424.8.1 DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEWS

In preparation for each quarterly counseling and annual evaluation supervisors shall complete a full review of no less than one, and no more than 3, randomly selected recordings for any

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member either assigned, or routinely using, a recording device. The completion of this review shall be documented in the member's counseling or evaluation report. When necessary, the reviewing supervisor may take necessary steps to address or recognize actions of any member observed in the recording(s).

The limitation for review identified above shall not limit the supervisor's ability to review additional recordings when necessary including, but not limited to:

- (a) Investigations of alleged misconduct,
- (b) Reviewing uses of force,
- (c) Completing early intervention reviews,
- (d) As a part of a performance improvement plan, and
- (e) Any necessary weekly field training reviews.