



**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
FIRE/EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER**

General Order Number: 03-18	Effective Date: November 26, 2018
Division: Communication and Information Management/Technology	
Chapter: Audio and Visual Recording Devices	
By Order of the Fire Chief: Benjamin M. Barksdale <i>[Signature]</i>	Issue Date: November 26, 2018

POLICY

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines for the use of audio, visual, and video recording devices to capture response or service delivery on an emergency incident, or otherwise capture imagery related to the operations of the Prince George's County Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department. Because fire and EMS personnel have access to private property and information during the course of performing their official duties, it is of vital importance to ensure that personnel maintain the public trust and respect for the reasonable expectation of privacy of citizens that receive Department services.

DEFINITIONS

Camera – A device that is capable of taking still photos and printing or recording that information in any format.

Command Officer – Career or Volunteer Chief officer.

Quality Management – A systematic and proactive approach to continuously improve all processes during the delivery of emergency services.

Social Media – The collective of online communications channels and content dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Examples include, but are not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and blog sites.

Recording Device – Any device capable of recording audio, video and/or photographic images. Examples include, but are not limited to, mobile electronic devices, laptops, tablets, cell phones, cameras, GoPros, audio recorders, etc.

PROCEDURES / RESPONSIBILITIES

I. General Information

- A. The use of recording devices, cameras, or features on any electronic devices that record video, audio and visual imagery is strictly prohibited on emergency scenes unless authorized by the Fire Chief through the chain-of-command.
- B. Personnel are prohibited from using or wearing helmet cameras, GoPros, or any other type of wearable or mobile recording device during an emergency response.



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- C. The use of stationary recording devices that are mounted on apparatus or vehicles, such as dash cameras, are permissible. Such devices should be registered with the Department and footage shall be made available upon request.
- D. The release of any pictures, recordings and/or videos to any persons, entities, social media, website, or media outlet is strictly prohibited without written authorization from the Public Information Officer (PIO) and/or the Office of the Fire Chief.
- E. Any recordings or photos made during an emergency response or otherwise involving County owned, operated, fueled, insured, or maintained equipment or property shall be produced and made available to the Department upon request for use in the quality management process, to improve and enhance service delivery provided by the Fire/EMS Department, investigations, or to defend itself from liability.
- F. At NO time will a picture and/or video recording device be utilized where it would be a violation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Any picture and/or video that inadvertently captures patient care or shows any protected health information (i.e., faces of patients or images of records) shall be immediately deleted unless the Department requests its use for investigation purposes.

II. Photography and Video Recording Devices

- A. Authorized command officers may utilize recording devices in their vehicles.
- B. Wearable video recording devices such as body cameras, helmet cameras, etc. must be granted approval from the Fire Chief. Personnel requesting to wear a wearable video recording device must submit the request in writing via the chain-of-command to the Office of the Fire Chief. The request must include the make and model of the camera, temperature rating if any, all applicable safety information, and the location where the device will be worn.
- C. Suppression apparatus may have a video recording device at the discretion of the officer in charge (OIC).
- D. At no time shall the use of a recording device hinder service delivery or vehicle operation.
- E. In light of the access to sensitive and protected areas and information that is available to personnel during the course of providing emergency services, and the public trust that accompanies that access, it is vital that Department personnel uphold this trust at all times. At no time will a recording device be used where an individual would have a reasonable expectation of privacy. This includes any location where medical care is rendered, on private property (including a yard), or inside a private residence. Vehicles or apparatus that are outfitted with stationary cameras or persons with recording devices may only record what is in plain view from public property only, unless specifically authorized by the Office of the Fire Chief.



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III. Pictures and Recording Use

- A. The primary purpose of any pictures and/or videos captured is for the use in a quality management process in an effort to improve performance and service delivery.
- B. Pictures and videos will be available to Battalion Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs, the Public Information Officer, the Fire Chief, and Fire/EMS Investigators upon request.
- C. Any type of recording made during or related to an emergency response shall not be disseminated or published to any persons or entities without authorization from the Office of the Fire Chief. This includes posting on the internet or on social media websites.

REFERENCES

Michigan v. Tyler, 436 U.S. 499 (1978).

Michigan v. Clifford, 464 U.S. 287 (1984).

Wilson v. Layne, 526 U.S. 603 (1999).

FORMS / ATTACHMENTS

N/A