



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

General Order Number: 03-18	Effective Date: July 1, 2023
Division: Communication and Information Management/Technology	
Chapter: Audio and Visual Recording Devices	
By Order of the County Fire Chief: Tiffany D. Green <i>JA</i>	Issue Date: June 29, 2023

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. Fire/EMS personnel have access to private property and information while performing their official duties. Maintaining the public trust and respecting the reasonable privacy expectations of those who receive Department services is vitally important.

SCOPE

This General Order applies to all sworn, civilian, and volunteer personnel of the Prince George’s County Fire/EMS Department.

DEFINITIONS

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

Command Officer – A career or volunteer chief officer or any member, career or volunteer, acting as an Assistant Fire Chief or a Battalion Fire Chief.

Quality Management – A systematic and proactive approach for improving the delivery of emergency services.

Social Media – The collective of online communications channels and content dedicated to input from the general, worldwide public, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Examples include, but are not limited to, TikTok, 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, “GoPro” devices, and audio recorders.

PROCEDURES / RESPONSIBILITIES

I. General Provisions

- A. Members may not use recording devices, cameras, or features on any electronic devices that record video, audio and visual imagery on emergency scenes unless authorized by the



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County Fire Chief through the chain-of-command or listed in reference documents (i.e. – Maryland State Medical Protocols) that support patient care by clinician.

- B. All data recorded by any recording devices, cameras, or features on any electronic devices that record video, audio and visual imagery is under the ownership and control of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department, Office of the Fire Chief, regardless of who owns the recording device.
- C. Personnel may not use or wear helmet cameras, "GoPro" devices, or any other type of wearable or mobile recording device during an emergency response without the written approval of the Office of the Fire Chief.
- D. Members may use stationary recording devices mounted on apparatus or vehicles, such as dash cameras. Members must register such devices. Members may request a copy of the data or footage in writing to Office of the Fire Chief. If the member owns and can access the stationary recording device, the member must request from the Office of the Public Information Director to use the footage.
- E. Members may not release any pictures, recordings, or videos to any persons, entities, social media applications, websites, or other media outlets without written authorization from the Public Information Officer (PIO) and/or the Office of the Fire Chief.
- F. 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. The information obtained can be used for quality assurance management process, to improve and enhance service delivery provided by the Fire/EMS Department, investigations, or to defend itself from liability.
- G. Members may not use any recording device in a manner that violates 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 approved by the County Fire Chief.
- C. Personnel requesting to wear/mount a video recording device must submit the request in writing via the proper chain-of-command to the Office of the Fire Chief. The request must include:



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1. make and model of the camera,
 2. temperature rating if any,
 3. all applicable safety information, and the
 4. location where the device will be worn/mounted.
- D. Once approved, any Suppression apparatus may have a video recording device at the discretion of the officer in charge (OIC).
- E. At no time shall the use of a recording device hinder service delivery or vehicle operation.
- F. 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.

III. Pictures and Recording Use

- A. Pictures or videos captured in the course of service provision should primarily be used for quality management, or to improve performance and service delivery.
- B. Pictures and videos shall be made available to Battalion Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs, the Public Information Officer, the County Fire Chief, and Prince George's County Fire/EMS Fire Marshal's Office upon request.
- C. Members may not disseminate or publish any recording made during or related to an emergency response, including on social media or other websites, without authorization from the Public Information Officer or the Office of the Fire Chief.
- D. Violation of any of the provisions of this General Order by any member of the department (career/volunteer) may result in discipline up to and including termination/separation.

IV. Registration of Video Recording Devices

- A. All Video devices **MUST** be registered with the Office of the Fire Chief prior to use.



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[REGISTRATION LINK](#) OR on your mobile device at



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

Registration of Audio/Visual Recording Devices