

Justice Department Announces First Federal Agents To Use Body-Worn Cameras

September 2 2021 9:34 AM



WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the Department of Justice announced the launch of the first phase of its Body-Worn Camera Program that requires department law enforcement personnel use body-worn cameras (BWCs) during pre-planned law enforcement operations.

Agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) Phoenix and Detroit Field Divisions began using BWCs today during these pre-planned operations. Over the course of the next several weeks, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) will begin the first phase of their BWC programs. The department's plans include a phased implementation of BWCs and rely upon Congress to secure the necessary funding to equip agents nationwide with BWCs.

"Keeping our communities safe is a top priority for the Justice Department," said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. "Law enforcement is at its most effective when there is accountability and trust between law enforcement and the community. That is why we have expanded our body-worn camera program to our federal agents, to promote transparency and confidence, not only with the communities we serve and protect but also among our state, local and Tribal law enforcement partners who work alongside our federal agents each day."

"The Department of Justice recognizes the importance of transparency and accountability in its law enforcement operations," said Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco. "Because there are circumstances where the use of force may occur during planned law enforcement operations, we are committed to the use of body-worn cameras by DOJ law enforcement agents in such circumstances. I am proud of the job performed by the department's law enforcement agents, and I am confident that these policies will continue to engender the trust and confidence of the American people in the department's work."

"ATF welcomes the use of body-worn cameras by our agents," said Acting Director Marvin G. Richardson of the ATF. "The department's policy reflects ATF's commitment to transparency as we work to reduce firearm violence in our communities."

"The Drug Enforcement Administration is committed to the safety and security of the people we serve, our agents, and task force officers," said Administrator Anne Milgram of the DEA. "We welcome the addition of body-worn cameras and appreciate the enhanced transparency and assurance they provide to the public and to law enforcement officers working hard to keep our communities safe and healthy."

“The FBI remains committed to meeting the need for transparency,” said FBI Director Christopher Wray. “Phasing in the use of BWCs is another, important way for us to meet that need.”

“Every day USMS task forces lawfully apprehend violent criminals with the utmost professionalism,” said Director Donald Washington of the U.S. Marshals Service. “We continue striving to fortify the public’s trust in our responsibility to uphold the rule of law while keeping communities safe as we have for more than two centuries. Body-worn cameras increase the transparency of law enforcement activities, and we will work to obtain the necessary resources to fully execute our body-worn camera program. As we do so, Deputy United States Marshals – along with thousands of local task force officers on USMS-led task forces – will continue to safeguard communities from violent criminals, drug traffickers, and threats of terrorism. These interagency task force operations are crucial to public safety.”

On June 7, based on recommendations from the Department’s law enforcement components, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco directed the ATF, DEA, FBI, and USMS to develop individualized comprehensive policies that require agents to wear and activate BWC recording equipment for purposes of recording their actions during: (1) a pre-planned attempt to serve an arrest warrant or other pre-planned arrest, including the apprehension of fugitives sought on state and local warrants; or (2) the execution of a search or seizure warrant or order. Consistent across each of these policies is a presumption that BWC recordings depicting conduct resulting in serious bodily injury or death of another will be released as soon as practical.

The use of BWCs by federal agents builds upon the department’s October 2019 pilot program and [October 2020](#) policy announcement to permit federally deputized task force officers to activate BWCs during these pre-planned law enforcement operations. Since October 2020, ATF, DEA, FBI, and USMS have been integrating the use of BWCs on federal task forces around the nation. The department continues to encourage participating task force agencies to contact the sponsoring federal agency for more information about their BWC program.