

Quincy Police Department
Law Enforcement Camera Grant Act Report
Calendar year: 2024



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Date: February 1, 2025

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Brief Overview:

The City of Quincy is a home rule, incorporated municipality located along the Mississippi River in west central Illinois. According to the most recent census information, the population of Quincy is 39,131 (2021). The nearest larger city from Quincy is Springfield, IL, which is 110 miles to the east. The metro population of Quincy is 75,546 and due to its location, industry and commerce, and its status as the Adams County Seat the daytime population is well over 60,000.

The Quincy Police Department currently employs 73 sworn law enforcement officers and one civilian Animal Control Officer. Of the sworn personnel the breakdown is as follows: 1 Chief, 2 Deputy Chiefs, 3 Lieutenants, 12 Sergeants, and 55 officers. At any given time of those officers, approximately 50 are assigned to the patrol division as either a Patrol Officer, K-9 Officer, Pro Act, Elder Services, Task Force, or Housing Officer. Of the 12 Sergeants, 8 are assigned to supervise the 4 patrol squads. The Quincy Police Department Patrol Division works 12 hour shifts over a 2 week alternating off day schedule.

The Quincy Police Department deployed “Officer-Worn Body Cameras” in early October of 2018. QPD no longer supports the program with any grant funding. QPD utilizes a product called “BodyWorn” by Utility. The body cameras are generally worn on the middle of the officer’s chest in either a “molle” pouch attached to a tactical vest, or in a custom designed pouch that is sewn into the outer vest carrier or uniform shirt. The camera itself is a Motorola Moto smart cellular phone that has been specifically modified for Utility to function only as a body worn camera.

The Quincy Police Department currently leases 79 separate body camera systems. Every sworn officer as well as the Animal Control Officer have been issued their own body camera that they are responsible for maintaining. QPD has 5 “spare” cameras that are kept on hand in case an officer’s issued camera is not able to be used, there is a technical issue, or a camera gets damaged and must be sent back for repair.

The Quincy Police Department also received 17 in-car camera systems, of which all are currently installed and are actively being used. The system consists of a forward facing camera, a camera and microphone to record individuals in the back seat during transport, a tablet to control the functions of the in-car camera system and recording hardware that is mounted in the trunk area of the squad cars. The cameras are automatically initiated to record if the overhead emergency lights are activated, the gun lock release is used, if a pre-determined speed of the vehicle is reached or the vehicle is involved in a crash which activates the crash sensors. The system will also automatically turn on if an officer drives into an action zone, whether it is their own call for service action zone or another officer’s on a separate call. Whenever the system is activated, it automatically records one additional minute prior to the system being activated. All videos are automatically uploaded to a secure server for storage and review.

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Technical Issues:

Each officer employed by the Quincy Police Department at the time of initial camera deployment, or at the time of new officer training, received training in the operation of not only the body worn camera, but also the corresponding cloud based software (AvailWeb) where the recorded media is stored. Each individual officer has a specific username and password to access this website as well as to log into his or her body worn camera. All movement within the website is tracked by user in order to maintain evidentiary integrity of all media.

Given the scope of this program, including the number of officers utilizing body worn cameras and in car cameras systems, we have encountered a few technical issues in year 2024. The technical support service provided by Utility is outstanding. Every Utility support employee is extremely knowledgeable in the functionality of the equipment and is always able and willing to assist the program administrator trouble shoot any reported problems.

BodyWorn body cameras utilize a wristwatch style Bluetooth controller that is the officers' primary way of controlling the camera. The Bluetooth controller does not affect the media recorded by the body camera, but functions as the camera's start/stop, mute, status indicator, and volume controller. We have extras we distribute to the officer and have the defective ones replaced by Utility.

In fall of 2023, we received an upgraded version of the Body Worn Camera as part of our lease package. We received 80 new Motorola Moto body cameras, wristwatches, mounts, and chargers as well as 17 new in car cameras.

Occasionally we will have a video that is not properly downloaded to the cloud storage and we have to contact Utility to correct the problem for it to be downloaded correctly. This occurrence is rare and is immediately fixed by Utility without any loss or destruction of the officer's video. We have also had issues with battery life on some of the devices, however Utility works to replace the device or aid as needed.

One issue that did arise was during the issuance of the new body cameras and in car camera systems. Two Utility employees made site visits. One to assist with the installation and upgrade of the in-car systems. The other to provide current feature education. During this visit changes were made to the configurations without approval or request from QPD. This caused a change in how the videos were uploaded and switched it from Wi-Fi only to any data. This change resulted in an astronomical data bill from AT&T. Once brought to our attention we were able to quickly identify who made the change and exactly when. We worked through the first few months of 2024 to correct this and being able to identify who made the unrequested changes and when assisted in getting the bill resolved.

Overall, this year the camera systems have performed well with very little technical issues. We still experience battery life issues with some devices, but it seems inconsistent. Some work without any issues. We are extremely satisfied with the overall performance of the system we have chosen.

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Supervisor Review:

All supervisors, Sergeant or above, have the ability to view all body worn camera footage recorded and uploaded to the AvailWeb website. In Jan of 2024 we experienced an officer involved shooting. Having the ability to view the videos from the scene assisted in numerous ways. Quincy Police Department policy limits the specific circumstances when a supervisor can review those recordings. Supervisors are allowed to view media specifically brought to their attention. This may occur in a multitude of ways. Some examples include a citizen complaint, a review of tactics, an ongoing investigation, reported technical issues, for report writing purposes, reported or suspected misconduct, reported or suspected policy/procedure violations, internal affairs investigations, etc.

Supervisors are prohibited from reviewing body worn camera footage randomly for the sole purpose of locating infractions of policy/procedure to take disciplinary action against an officer.

Additional Information:

The Quincy Police Department implemented our body worn camera program in October, 2018. Since then, the overall acceptance by the officers has been good. Any police department would be disingenuous to not anticipate a certain level of reluctance from rank and file officers when implementing the use of new equipment like this. We are blessed to have found a product that helped to make our transition as smooth as possible.

The biggest concern that still concerns our agency is with the use of this technology the costs associated with FOIA requests, and the requirements mandated by the Body Worn Camera Use Report. To date our department has had to hire one additional employee to handle the workload associated with copying videos for evidence and fulfilling FOIA requests. The requests continue to remain steady, and we have attempted to streamline the process for downloads for evidence and FOIA requests. A database is kept on all videos that are downloaded.

In 2024 officers submitted 981 digital video requests with a total of 1852 videos downloaded. The requests more than doubled in 2024 from 2023 and the number of videos downloaded increased by 60%. Each of these requests many times has videos for both the body worn camera and in car camera video. In addition, any given request may include videos from multiple officers at the same incident, which drastically increases the total number of videos requested to be downloaded to DVD for court proceedings.

In summary, our department is happy with our decision to acquire and widely use body worn cameras. The prosecutor's office has already commented about the increased number defendants who are pleading guilty after their defense attorney showed them the body worn camera footage from the incident. We firmly believe that these devices will certainly protect officers from false accusations of misconduct or use of excessive force, as well as aid with the prevention or quick disposition of frivolous lawsuits.

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Body worn cameras would be an asset to any department, and it would make sense that the Illinois State Legislature would want to make it as easy as possible for police departments to acquire and deploy body worn cameras.