

**BWC AUDIT REPORT**  
**15<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT**  
**MARCH, 2025**



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Auditing, Policy, and  
Research Division

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# OVERVIEW

Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) are systems that capture audio and/or video signals and are individually worn by police officers. These devices provide audio and video recording of events that officers encounter. Body Worn Cameras are useful to both law enforcement and the public for preserving factual representations of officer-citizen interactions.

CPOC wanted to learn more about how the Philadelphia Police Department used their BWC in practice as well as the Directive 4.21 (Body Worn Cameras) which outlines procedures for proper BWC operation. Using the guidelines outlined in Directive 4.21 as a guide, CPOC developed an audit project to assess whether a BWC recording was done following the protocols established by the police department.

CPOC's Auditing, Policy, and Research Division conducted an audit of a random sample of all 75-48s from the 15<sup>th</sup> district generated in March of 2025.

**Note:** A 75-48 is an incident report completed by police to establish and maintain a permanent written record of all founded offenses, arrests, complaints, particular incidents, and services requiring police action. Different incident types can result in the preparation of different 75-48s. (See PPD Directive 12.11)

For this audit (75) incident reports were randomly selected to be audited. Of those reports (32) were related to instances that were recorded via BWC resulting in (49) total BWC videos being audited for this report (many instances were recorded by more than 1 officer). 35 of these reports did not include BWC recordings.

**Note:** 8 of the incident reports in our random sample were not shared with CPOC. As such, CPOC did not include these reports in our data bringing the random sample size to (67) incident reports.

A summary of our audit process as well as a statistical analysis of our findings are detailed in the following portions of this report.

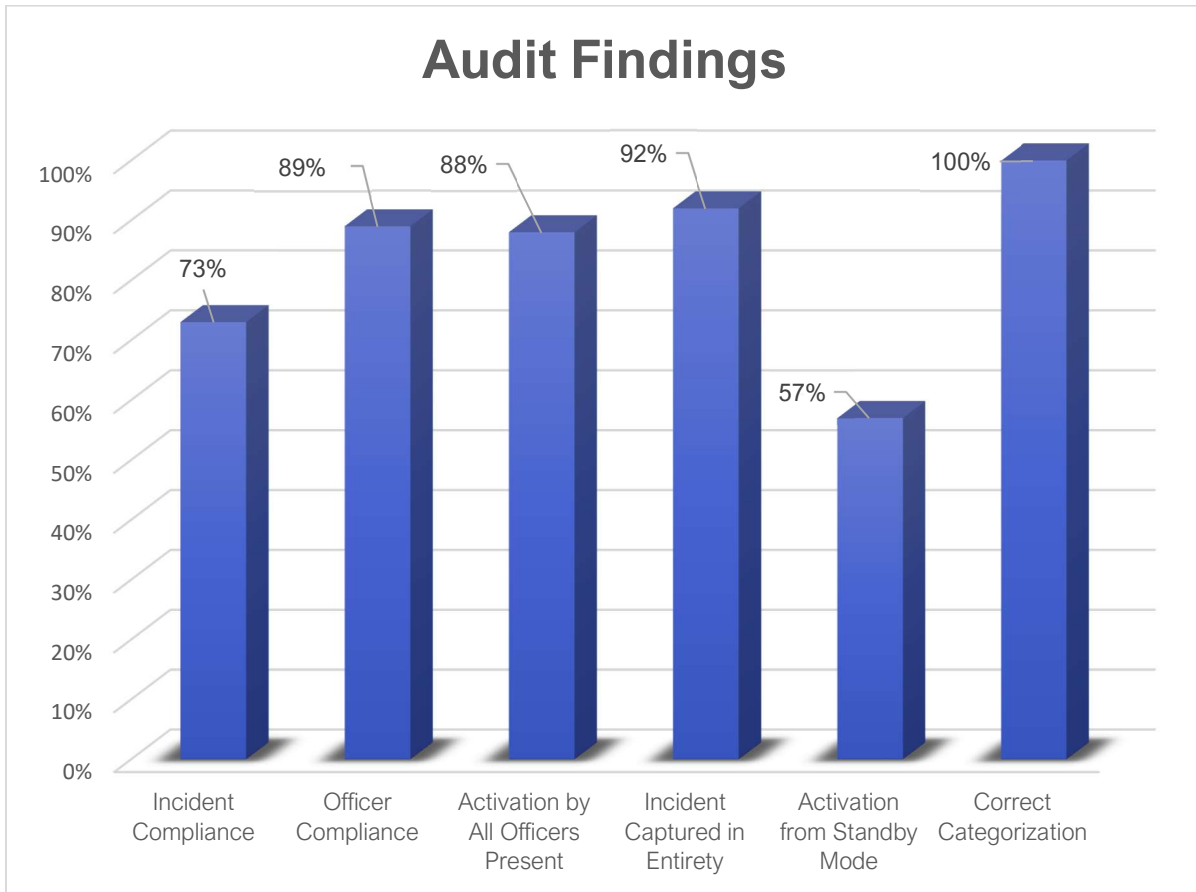


# AUDIT PROCESS:

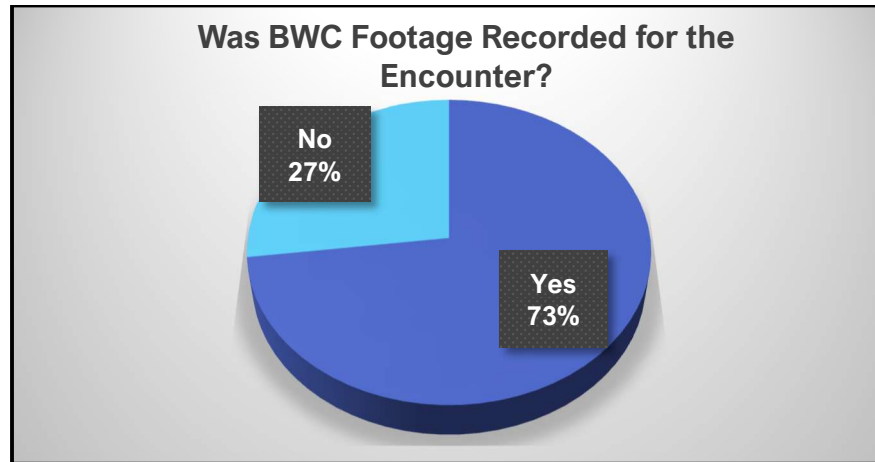
CPOC used the following criteria to audit the BWC videos in the random sample. The criteria were developed using PPD Directive 4.21 which outlines the rules for proper BWC usage. If an incident had multiple videos from multiple officers, all videos were reviewed. The questions used in the audit are listed below.

- Did a search / review of PPD's digital evidence management system produce any notable errors in the titling, naming, or categorizing of the BWC video by the officer?
- Was the BWC video categorized?
- Was the BWC video categorized correctly according to the nature of the encounter?
- What was the BWC video categorized with?
- What should the BWC video be categorized with?
- Was the officers BWC on for the duration of the encounter?
  - If no, did it... (select all that apply)
    - Start Late
    - End Early
- Did the BWC video include the entire 60 second buffering period?
- Did the Officer state why they were turning off their BWC before doing so?
- Did the Officer articulate that they were shutting off their BWC for any of the following permissible reasons?
  - Gruesome images or exposed private areas of the human body without a legitimate reason to capture such images.
  - Officer(s) entering a religious institution during services.
  - BWC would capture officer(s) entering a hospital room or private patient area in the hospital.
  - A crime scene has been established, and officer(s) have been placed on post to safeguard the scene.
- Was the officer's BWC used to record any of the following prohibited activities/behaviors?
  - Non-work-related personal activities / conversations.
  - Places where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists (i.e., locker rooms, dressing rooms or restrooms).
  - Conversations with confidential informants and undercover officers.
  - Strip searches.
  - Operational strategies or tactics.
  - Conversations of fellow employees or supervisors during routine administrative activities not related to those incidents or events described in Section 3-A.
  - Media captured on a BWC to another recording device i.e., cell phone.
- Were there other officers on the scene who did not record BWC footage but did have the capacity to do so?

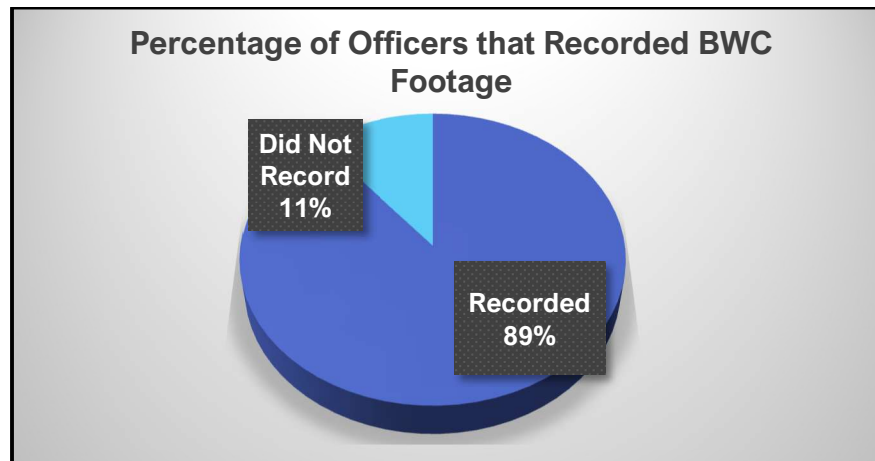
# VISUAL DATA



# VISUAL DATA

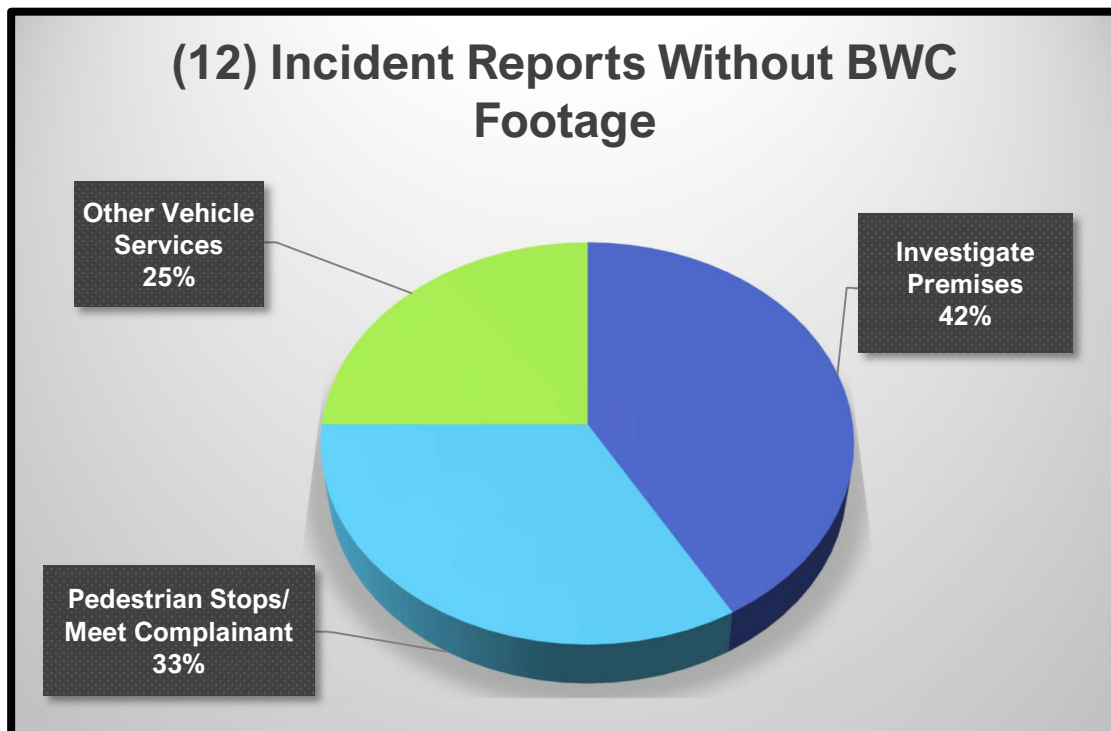


(44) out of the random sample of 67 total incident reports should have had BWC footage attached. PPDs Digital Media Evidence Unit provided BWC videos for 32 incident reports and CPOC located no additional videos during our review process bringing the total number of recorded incidents to 32/44 (73%). The (12) incident reports that should have had BWC footage but did not are detailed on pg. 7 and were shared with the 15<sup>th</sup> district accordingly.



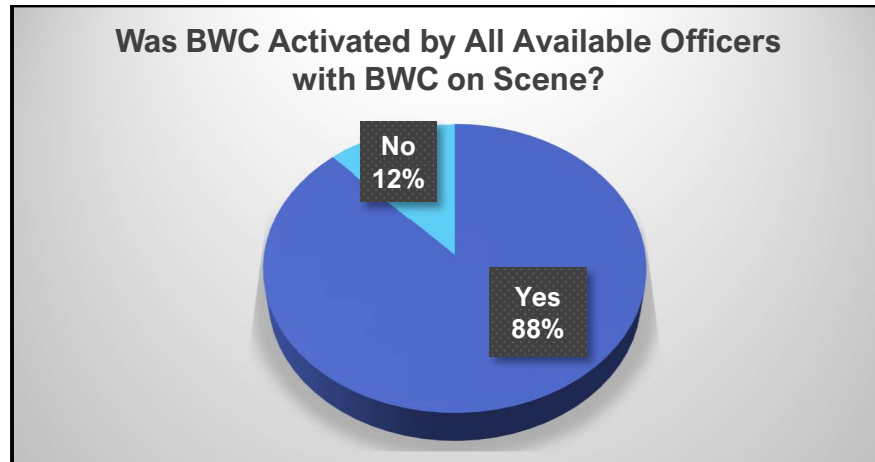
Of the 57 total officers seen wearing BWCs during incidents observed in the random sample, 51 (89%) of these officers recorded BWC for the incident. Of the 51 officers who recorded BWC, 53% of them operated their BWC within all departmental guidelines (see page 10 for additional information regarding the criteria used to determine this figure).

# VISUAL DATA

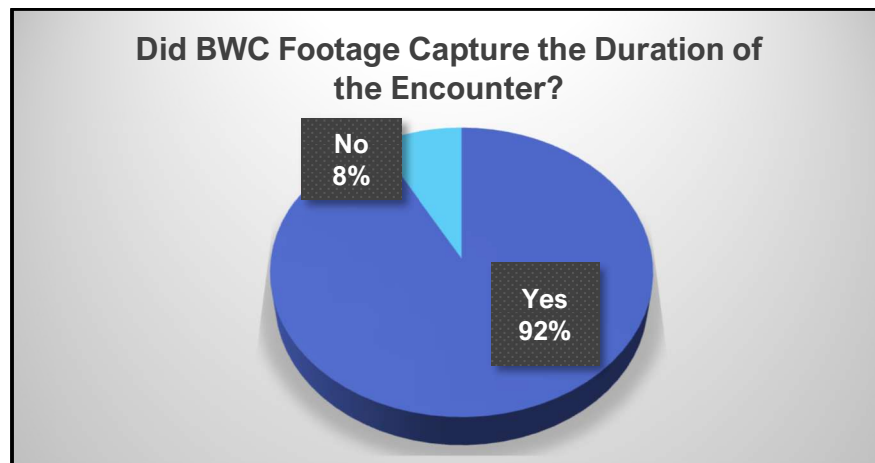


Incident Type	Number of Unrecorded Incidents	Additional Information
Investigate Premises	5	Incidents included: Police response to a report of theft / burglary (2), police response to a report of domestic incident (1), police response to disturbance (1), and police investigation of person involving SEPTA vehicle (1)
Pedestrian Stop / Meet Complainant	4	Incidents included: Pedestrian stop resulting in citation (2), report of a stolen vehicle (1), and report of aggravated assault (1)
Other Vehicle Services	3	Incidents included: Vehicle repossession (1), response to abandoned vehicle (1), and citation of an abandoned vehicle (1)

# VISUAL DATA

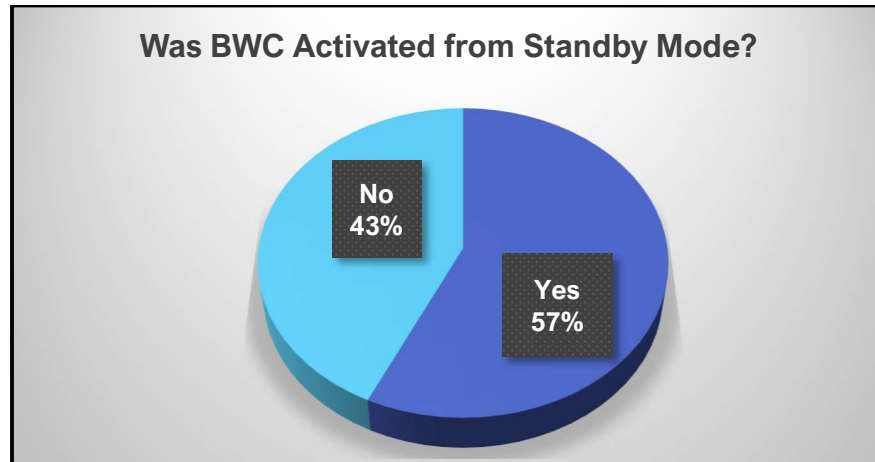


Of the **49** total BWC videos audited by CPOC, **43 (88%)** depicted incidents in which all on scene officers equipped with BWC recorded the incident. The incident reports that included officers who did not use their BWC were shared with the 15<sup>th</sup> district accordingly.

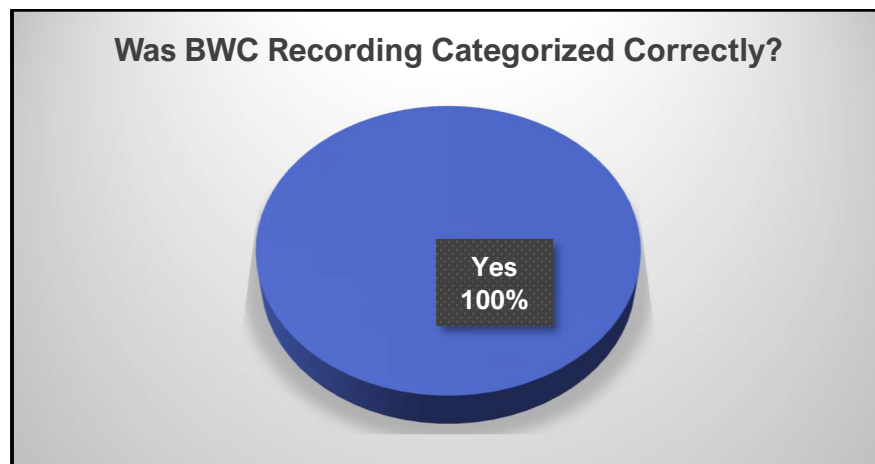


Of the **49** total BWC videos audited, **45 (92%)** of these instances were captured in their entirety by the recording officer. The incident reports that did not capture the entire encounter were shared with the 15<sup>th</sup> district accordingly.

# VISUAL DATA



Of the **49** total BWC videos audited, **28 (57%)** of these recordings were activated from standby mode. This indicates that the recording officers had their cameras properly turned on prior to activation. The instances in which the officer(s) BWCs were completely turned off prior to the incident were shared with the 15<sup>th</sup> district accordingly.



Of the **49** total BWC videos reviewed by CPOC, **49 (100%)** were categorized appropriately according to the nature of the incident and the information provided on the incident report. Proper categorizing is critical for evidence preservation and locating relevant BWC footage within the data storage system. These results were shared with the 15<sup>th</sup> district accordingly.

# ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

*Did a search / review of PPD's digital evidence management system produce any notable errors in the titling, naming, or labeling of the BWC video by the officer?*

1/49 (2%) of BWC videos audited contained notable errors in the titling, naming, or labeling of the BWC video. 48/49 (98%) of BWC videos audited contained none of the aforementioned errors.

*BWCs activated in compliance with Directive 4.21 (captured full incident, BWC activated from standby mode, did not record anything prohibited).*

26/49 (53%) of BWC videos audited captured the entire incident, were activated from standby mode, and did not record anything prohibited (as defined in Directive 4.21), 23/49 (47%) did not meet these conditions.

*Did BWC footage capture the duration of the encounter? (Did the BWC start late? End early?)*

4/49 (8%) of the BWC videos audited did not capture the incident entirely. 2 of the BWC videos ended early and 2 of the BWC videos started late.

*Did the officer state why they were turning their BWC off before doing so?*

2 BWC videos in the sample were deactivated before the end of the incident (which would require the officer to state out loud the reason for deactivation per Directive 4.21).

None (0/2) of these BWC videos depicted an instance in which an officer stated why they were shutting off their BWC before doing so (the results were shared with the 15<sup>th</sup> District accordingly).

*Was the officer's BWC used to record any of the following prohibited activities/behaviors?*

*(Non-work-related personal activities / conversations, Places where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists (i.e., locker rooms, dressing rooms or restrooms), Conversations with confidential informants and undercover officers., Strip searches, Operational strategies or tactics, Conversations of fellow employees or supervisors during routine administrative activities not related to those incidents or events described in Section 3-A., Media captured on a BWC to another recording device i.e., cell phone)*

No videos (0/49) in this sample showed any of the above listed prohibited activities/ behaviors.

# ACTION STEPS

CPOC recommends the following actions steps to improve compliance with Directive 4.21,

**Action Step 1:** During roll call prior to the start of each shift supervisors should remind officers to turn their BWC devices on immediately after receiving them at the beginning of the tour. Supervisors in the field should check the BWC status of their officers who are responding to calls and remind them that their BWC devices should be turned on and ready to record while they are on patrol.

**Action Step 2:** During roll call prior to the start of each shift supervisors should review Directive 4.21 so that officers have a clear understanding of when they are required to activate their BWC. Officers should be reminded to activate the BWC before they exit their vehicle for car stops, before they interact with a civilian during pedestrian stops, and prior to contact with civilians when the situation allows them to do so safely. Officers should be instructed to deactivate their BWC after the incident is over, when they have cleared the scene and are available for radio calls.

**Action Step 3:** During roll call prior to the start of each shift supervisors should remind officers to activate their BWC while providing backup during calls for service. Officers should be instructed that BWCs should be activated prior to responding to all calls for service, during all law enforcement related encounters, and during all activities involving the general public.

# C O N C L U S I O N

PPD's initial pilot program with BWCs began in 2014, however, the 15th district did not begin using the devices until January of 2024. More recently, PPD has begun to roll out a newer model of the device which is currently being utilized by officers within the 15th district. The operation of BWC devices continues to be relatively new to a number of members within the department. As such, minor BWC infractions can be the result of many different variables and may not necessarily meet the criteria for an officer to receive discipline. Thus, CPOC hopes this report can be used to identify situations that allow the department to reinforce procedural guidelines with their officers. Furthermore, CPOC will continue to assist the Philadelphia Police Department in maintaining compliance with Directive 4.21 in order to increase public trust and enhance officer safety.

