

Mobile Audio Video

419.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Forest Heights Police Department has equipped marked law enforcement vehicles with Mobile Audio Video (MAV) recording systems to provide records of events and to assist officers in the performance of their duties. This policy provides guidance on the use of these systems.

419.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Activate - Any process that causes the MAV system to transmit or store video or audio data in an active mode.

In-car camera system and MAV system - Synonymous terms that refer to any system that captures audio and video signals, that is capable of installation in a vehicle, and that includes at a minimum, a camera, microphone, recorder and monitor.

MAV technician - Personnel certified or trained in the operational use and repair of MAVs, duplicating methods, storage and retrieval methods and procedures, and who have a working knowledge of video forensics and evidentiary procedures.

Recorded media - Audio-video signals recorded or digitally stored on a storage device or portable media.

419.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Forest Heights Police Department to use mobile audio and video technology to more effectively fulfill the mission of the Department and to ensure these systems are used securely and efficiently.

419.3 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Prior to going into service, each officer will properly equip him/herself to record audio and video in the field. At the end of the shift, each officer will follow the established procedures for providing to the Department any recordings or used media and any other related equipment. Each officer should have adequate recording media for the entire duty assignment. In the event an officer works at a remote location and reports in only periodically, additional recording media may be issued. Only Forest Heights Police Department identified and labeled media with tracking numbers is to be used.

At the start of each shift, officers should test the MAV system's operation in accordance with manufacturer specifications and department operating procedures and training.

System documentation is accomplished by the officer recording his/her name, serial number, badge or personal identification number (PIN) and the current date and time at the start and again at the end of each shift. If the system is malfunctioning, the officer shall take the vehicle out of service unless a supervisor requests the vehicle remain in service.

Forest Heights Police Department

Policy Manual

Mobile Audio Video

419.4 ACTIVATION OF THE MAV

The MAV system is designed to turn on whenever the vehicle's emergency lights are activated. The system remains on until it is turned off manually. The audio portion is independently controlled and should be activated manually by the officer whenever the officer (Md. Code CJ § 10-402):

- (a) Initially lawfully detains a vehicle during a criminal investigation or for a traffic violation.
- (b) Is a party to the oral communication.
- (c) Has been identified as a law enforcement officer to the other parties of the oral communication prior to any interception.
- (d) Informs all other parties to the communication of the interception at the beginning of the communication, and the oral interception is being made as part of a video tape recording.

419.4.1 REQUIRED ACTIVATION OF THE MAV

This policy is not intended to describe every possible situation in which the MAV system may be used, although there are many situations where its use is appropriate. An officer may activate the system any time the officer believes it would be appropriate or valuable to document an incident.

The video portion of the MAV system should be activated:

- (a) All field contacts involving actual or potential criminal conduct within range:
 - 1. Priority responses
 - 2. Vehicle pursuits
 - 3. Suspicious vehicles
 - 4. Arrests
 - 5. Vehicle searches
 - 6. Physical or verbal confrontations or use of force
 - 7. Pedestrian checks
 - 8. Driving while impaired (DWI) or driving under the influence (DUI) investigations, including field sobriety tests
 - 9. Consensual encounters
 - 10. Crimes in progress
 - 11. Responding to an in-progress call
- (b) All self-initiated activity in which an officer would normally notify Prince George's County Public Safety Communications
- (c) Any call for service involving a crime where the recorder may aid in the apprehension and/or prosecution of a suspect:
 - 1. Domestic violence
 - 2. Disturbance of the peace

Forest Heights Police Department

Policy Manual

Mobile Audio Video

3. Offenses involving violence or weapons
 - (d) Any other contact that becomes adversarial after the initial contact, in a situation that would not otherwise require recording
 - (e) Any other circumstance where the officer believes that a recording of an incident would be appropriate

Activation of the MAV system is not required when exchanging information with other officers or during breaks, lunch periods, when not in service or actively on patrol.

419.4.2 CESSATION OF RECORDING

Once activated, the MAV system should remain on until the incident has concluded or as long as is legally acceptable. For the purpose of this section, conclusion of an incident has occurred when all arrests have been made, arrestees have been transported and all witnesses and victims have been interviewed. Recording may cease if an officer is simply waiting for a tow truck or a family member to arrive, or in other similar situations.

419.4.3 SURREPTITIOUS RECORDING

No member of this department may surreptitiously record a conversation of any other member of this department except with a court order or when lawfully authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

419.4.4 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors should determine if vehicles with non-functioning MAV systems should be placed into service. If these vehicles are placed into service, the appropriate documentation should be made, including notification of Prince George's County Public Safety Communications.

At reasonable intervals, supervisors should validate that:

- (a) Beginning and end-of-shift recording procedures are followed.
- (b) Logs reflect the proper chain of custody, including:
 1. The tracking number of the MAV system media.
 2. The date the media was issued.
 3. The name of the department member or the vehicle to which the media was issued.
 4. The date the media was submitted for retention.
 5. The name of the department member submitting the media.
 6. Holds for evidence indication and tagging as required.
- (c) The operation of MAV systems by new members is assessed and reviewed no less than biweekly.

Forest Heights Police Department

Policy Manual

Mobile Audio Video

When an incident arises that requires the immediate retrieval of the recorded media (e.g., serious crime scenes, officer-involved shootings or deaths, department-involved traffic accidents), a supervisor shall respond to the scene and ensure that the appropriate person properly retrieves the recorded media. The media may need to be treated as evidence and should be handled in accordance with current evidence procedures for recorded media.

Supervisors may activate the video of the MAV system remotely to monitor a developing situation, such as a chase, riot or an event that may threaten public safety, officer safety or both, when the purpose is to obtain tactical information to assist in managing the event. Supervisors shall not remotely activate the MAV system for the purpose of monitoring the conversations or actions of an officer.

419.5 REVIEW OF MAV RECORDINGS

All recording media, recorded images and audio recordings are the property of the Department. Dissemination outside of the Department is strictly prohibited, except to the extent permitted or required by law.

To prevent damage to, or alteration of, the original recorded media, it shall not be copied, viewed or otherwise inserted into any device not approved by the Department, MAV technician or forensic media staff. When reasonably possible, a copy of the original media shall be used for viewing (unless otherwise directed by the courts) to preserve the original media.

Recordings may be reviewed in any of the following situations:

- (a) By officers for use when preparing reports or statements
- (b) By a supervisor investigating a specific act of officer conduct
- (c) By a supervisor to assess officer performance
- (d) To assess proper functioning of MAV systems
- (e) By department investigators who are participating in an official investigation, such as a personnel complaint, administrative inquiry or a criminal investigation
- (f) By department personnel who request to review recordings
- (g) By an officer who is captured on or referenced in the video or audio data, and reviews and uses such data for any purpose relating to his/her employment
- (h) By court personnel through proper process or with the permission of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee
- (i) By the media through proper process
- (j) To assess possible training value
- (k) For training purposes. If an involved officer objects to showing a recording, his/her objection will be submitted to the command staff to determine if the training value outweighs the officer's objection.

Forest Heights Police Department

Policy Manual

Mobile Audio Video

- (l) As may be directed by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee

Members desiring to view any previously uploaded or archived MAV recording should submit a request in writing to the Shift Supervisor. Approved requests should be forwarded to the MAV technician for processing.

In no event shall any recording be used or shown for the purpose of ridiculing or embarrassing any member.

419.6 DOCUMENTING MAV USE

If any incident is recorded with either the video or audio system, the existence of that recording shall be documented in the officer's report. If a citation is issued, the officer shall make a notation on the back of the records copy of the citation indicating that the incident was recorded.

419.7 RECORDING MEDIA STORAGE AND INTEGRITY

Once submitted for storage, all recording media will be labeled and stored in a designated secure area. All recording media that is not booked as evidence will be retained for a minimum of 180 days and disposed of in accordance with the established records retention schedule.

419.7.1 COPIES OF ORIGINAL RECORDING MEDIA

Original recording media shall not be used for any purpose other than for initial review by a supervisor. Upon proper request, a copy of the original recording media will be made for use as authorized in this policy.

Original recording media may only be released in response to a court order or upon approval by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee. In the event that an original recording is released to a court, a copy shall be made and placed in storage until the original is returned.

419.7.2 MAV RECORDINGS AS EVIDENCE

Officers who reasonably believe that a MAV recording is likely to contain evidence relevant to a criminal offense, or a potential claim against the officer or against the Forest Heights Police Department, should indicate this in an appropriate report. Officers should ensure relevant recordings are preserved.

419.8 SYSTEM OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

- (a) MAV system vehicle installations should be based on officer safety requirements and the vehicle and device manufacturer's recommendations.
- (b) The MAV system should be configured to minimally record for 30 seconds prior to an event.
- (c) The MAV system should not be configured to record audio data occurring prior to activation.

Forest Heights Police Department

Policy Manual

Mobile Audio Video

- (d) Unless the transmitters being used are designed for synchronized use, only one transmitter, usually the primary initiating officer's transmitter, should be activated at a scene to minimize interference or noise from other MAV transmitters.
- (e) Officers using digital transmitters that are synchronized to their individual MAVs shall activate video recordings when responding in a support capacity. This is to obtain additional perspectives of the incident scene.
- (f) With the exception of law enforcement radios or other emergency equipment, other electronic devices should not be used inside MAV-equipped law enforcement vehicles to minimize the possibility of causing electronic or noise interference with the MAV system.
- (g) Officers shall not erase, alter, reuse, modify or tamper with MAV recordings. Only a supervisor, MAV technician or other authorized designee may erase and reissue previous recordings and may only do so pursuant to the provisions of this policy.
- (h) To prevent damage, original recordings shall not be viewed or otherwise inserted into any device not approved by the Department, MAV technician or forensic media staff.

419.9 MAV TECHNICIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

The MAV technician is responsible for:

- (a) Ordering, issuing, retrieving, storing, erasing and duplicating of all recorded media.
- (b) Collecting all completed media for oversight and verification of wireless downloaded media. Once collected, the MAV technician:
 - 1. Ensures it is stored in a secure location with authorized controlled access.
 - 2. Makes the appropriate entries in the chain of custody log.
- (c) Erasing of media:
 - 1. Pursuant to a court order.
 - 2. In accordance with the established records retention schedule, including reissuing all other media deemed to be of no evidentiary value.
- (d) Assigning all media an identification number prior to issuance to the field:
 - 1. Maintaining a record of issued media.
- (e) Ensuring that an adequate supply of recording media is available.
- (f) Managing the long-term storage of media that has been deemed to be of evidentiary value in accordance with the department evidence storage protocols and the established records retention schedule.

Forest Heights Police Department

Policy Manual

Mobile Audio Video

419.10 TRAINING

All members who are authorized to use the MAV system shall successfully complete an approved course of instruction prior to its use including the limitations of conducting audio recordings under Maryland law.