



DENVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

Training Bulletin

GERALD R. WHITMAN, CHIEF OF POLICE

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Denver CopWatch Volunteers

Denver CopWatch is an organization whose members will often observe and videotape police actions, including involved officers and officers' names and badges. CopWatch members typically wear yellow or orange vests printed with the words "CopWatch." CopWatch members will usually ask officers for business cards at the scene after a contact or incident has been concluded.

Members of the public have the right to observe police officers so long as the members of the public do so in a way that does not interfere with the officers' ability to do their job. The public also has the right to record, videotape, photograph, and otherwise document officers and individuals contacted or detained by officers in public places. These rights include the right to film, videotape, and photograph and otherwise document an officer's contact with juveniles in public places. Officers will respect this right to observe and refrain from detaining or arresting individuals who are only observing police actions in public areas.

Officers are required to give their name and badge number (or a business card containing that information) to any member of the public on request, unless such action is likely to jeopardize the successful completion of a police assignment. This information shall be provided to any individual making a request, regardless if they are members of CopWatch and regardless of whether the officer(s) or the members of the public were actively involved in any incident. No retaliatory action shall be taken against any member of the community based on the request for identification. Any exercise of discretion by an officer with regard to a decision to arrest, cite, detain, search or question an individual must be made without regard to whether that individual has requested the identity or business card of an officer.

An officer should not confiscate a videotape without the express approval of a supervisory officer. Generally, confiscation of a videotape is allowed only where the tape could be evidence in a criminal investigation or where confiscation is necessary to protect the integrity of an ongoing criminal investigation.

Procedures to be followed regarding CopWatch Contacts by DPD Personnel:

- ✓ A Supervisor will respond whenever CopWatch volunteers arrive at the scene of a police action.
- ✓ Any concerns regarding CopWatch contacts must be documented and forwarded to the Division Chief of Patrol. The Division Chief of Patrol will contact CopWatch organizers.
- ✓ Document any instances where CopWatch volunteers create risk to officers or citizens during contact.
- ✓ Be aware that CopWatch volunteers may attempt to conduct additional "audit" activities such as videotaping activity at district stations, etc.
- ✓ Be aware that CopWatch volunteers will be using video cameras and they may covertly video police-citizen contacts.

As with any citizen, CopWatch volunteers must obey all laws and ordinances including the Denver Revised Municipal Code ordinances summarized below:

38-31 Interference with police authority: It shall be unlawful for any person to interfere with or hinder any police officer while such officer is discharging or apparently discharging their duties. Additionally, it shall be unlawful for any person to fail to obey a lawful order of a police officer if such failure interferes with or hinders such police officer in the discharge of his official duties.

38-86 Obstruction of streets or other public passageways: It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly obstruct a highway, street, sidewalk, building entrance, etc. to which the public has access or any other place used for the passage of persons, vehicles, or conveyances, whether the obstruction arises from the person's acts alone or from the person's acts and the acts of others. It shall also be unlawful to disobey a reasonable request or order to move issued by an individual the person knows, or reasonably should know, to be a peace officer, a firefighter, or a person with authority to control the use of the premises, to prevent obstruction of a highway or passageway or to maintain public safety by dispersing those gathered in dangerous proximity to a fire, riot, or other hazard.

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