

Placerville Police News Release



For Immediate Release

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Placerville Police Department Goes to Full Deployment with Body Worn Cameras

NEWS RELEASE

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Placerville, CA – Placerville Police Department expands body worn camera program to all officers.

This past week, the City of Placerville Police Department joined the short list of law enforcement agencies in the nation to go from testing body worn cameras to outfitting every officer on the street with the technology. The city's police force is the first agency in the foothills to go to full deployment of body worn cameras and joins the small but growing list of California agencies equipping their entire police force with body worn cameras.

The police department began testing and evaluation of body worn camera technology in early 2015 following then, Mayor Patty Borelli, and City Council's acceptance of a grant from the Northern California Cities Self Insurance Fund. The community and City Council were updated on the project in July 2015, advising of the lessons learned and the growing preference for the Taser Axon Flex cameras coupled with Samsung handheld devices. In January of this year, Mayor Trisha Wilkins, and City Council continued support for the project authorizing the Chief of Police to enter into a purchase and service agreement with Taser International, Inc. to equip the entire police force with Taser Axon Flex Body Worn Cameras. The approximate \$28,000 cost for the equipment and software with three years of support was mostly offset by an approximately \$18,500 grant from the Department of Homeland Security.

"The City Council and I have supported this project from the onset," said Mayor Trisha Wilkins. "The ongoing modernization of our police force provides our community the very best service they deserve."

The Placerville Police Department decided on utilizing this technology for various reasons which include: to enhance agency transparency, to improve digital evidence collection, to strengthen officer performance and accountability, to document encounters between police and the public, and to investigate and resolve complaints and officer involved critical incidents.

“We are excited to equip all of our officers with this essential tool,” said Police Chief Scott Heller. “This tool helps increase transparency and accountability within the ranks and within the community; it puts everyone, officers and citizens alike, on their best behaviors.”

The Taser Axon Flex cameras issued by the Placerville Police Department are a collar mount camera which captures video closely with the line of sight of the officer. The police department took public input on the body worn camera project at its public Strategic Plan Meeting in March of 2015, during City Council Meeting updates, and continues to invite public input. After consultation with the Placerville Police Officers Association, the US Department of Justice, Police Executive Research Forum, International Association of Chiefs of Police, California Police Chief's Association and various other law enforcement agencies throughout the state, the department has established a comprehensive policy aiming to strike a balance between the need to capture video evidence and privacy concerns. With this in mind, the police department will move forward with this technology in a way that aims to preserve and enhance the informal and unique relationships between police officers and citizens.

Training all the officers on these policies and the practices for the body worn camera will help the success of the program. “We did not rush to implement this in response to current events or trends, without careful consideration and planning,” explained Chief Heller. “We have been slow and methodical with this process including over a year of testing and evaluation to ensure that the public and our officers have a clear understanding of the benefits of the body worn cameras.”

The issuance of the equipment to 20 police officers began on Tuesday, April 12th. All police officers went through standardized training from a representative of Taser International, Inc. Many questions about the technical aspects of the cameras and evidence storage were answered. Because Placerville Police Department is the first in the county to utilize this technology, representatives from the District Attorney's Office partnered with the police department during the training to gain insight into the digital evidence management system. As the technology becomes commonplace the expectation is reduced time in court and increased successful prosecutions.



(Above is an image of the Taser Axon Flex body worn cameras worn by Placerville Police Officers)



(Officers equipped with BWC's)