

Portable Audio Recorders

422.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for the use of portable audio recording devices by members of the Department while in the performance of their duties. Portable audio recording devices include all recording systems whether body-worn, hand held or integrated into portable equipment.

This policy does not apply to body worn cameras, mobile audio/video recordings, authorized undercover operations, wiretaps or eavesdropping (concealed listening devices).

422.2 POLICY

The Santa Ana Police Department may provide members with access to portable audio recorders for use during the performance of their duties. The use of recorders is intended to enhance the mission of the Department by accurately capturing contacts between members of the Department and the public.

422.3 MEMBER PRIVACY EXPECTATION

All recordings made by members on any department-issued device at any time, and any recording made while acting in an official capacity for this department, regardless of ownership of the device it was made on, shall remain the property of the Department. Members shall have no expectation of privacy or ownership interest in the content of these recordings.

422.4 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

When using a portable audio recorder, the assigned member shall record his/her name, SAPD identification number and the current date and time at the beginning and the end of the shift or other period of use, regardless of whether any activity was recorded. This procedure is not required when the recording device and related software captures the user's unique identification and the date and time of each recording.

Members should document the existence of a recording in any report or other official record of the contact, including any instance where the recorder malfunctioned or the member deactivated the recording. Members should include the reason for deactivation.

422.4.1 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors should take custody of a portable audio/video recording device as soon as practicable when the device may have captured an incident involving the use of force, an officer-involved shooting or death or other serious incident, and ensure the data is downloaded (Penal Code § 832.18).

422.5 ACTIVATION OF THE PORTABLE AUDIO RECORDER

For direction regarding the activation of the portable audio recorder, refer to the Portable Digital Recording Devices Procedure.

Santa Ana Police Department

Santa Ana PD Policy Manual

Portable Audio Recorders

422.5.1 CESSATION OF RECORDING

Once activated, the portable recorder should remain on continuously until the member reasonably believes that his/her direct participation in the incident is complete or the situation no longer fits the criteria for activation. Recording may be stopped during significant periods of inactivity such as report writing or other breaks from direct participation in the incident.

Members shall cease audio recording whenever necessary to ensure conversations are not recorded between a person in custody and the person's attorney, religious advisor or physician, unless there is explicit consent from all parties to the conversation (Penal Code § 636).

422.5.2 SURREPTITIOUS USE OF THE PORTABLE RECORDER

Members of the Department may surreptitiously record any conversation during the course of a criminal investigation in which the member reasonably believes that such a recording will be lawful and beneficial to the investigation (Penal Code § 633).

Members shall not surreptitiously record another department member without a court order unless lawfully authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

422.5.3 EXPLOSIVE DEVICE

Many portable recorders, including body-worn cameras and audio/video transmitters, emit radio waves that could trigger an explosive device. Therefore, these devices should not be used where an explosive device may be present.

422.6 PROHIBITED USE OF PORTABLE RECORDERS

Members are prohibited from using department-issued portable audio recorders and recording media for personal use and are prohibited from making personal copies of audio recordings created while on-duty or while acting in their official capacity.

Members are also prohibited from retaining recordings of activities or information obtained while on-duty, whether the audio recording was created with department-issued or personally owned recorders. Members shall not duplicate or distribute such recordings, except for authorized legitimate department business purposes. All such recordings shall be retained at the Department.

Members are prohibited from using personally owned recording devices while on-duty without the express consent of the Watch Commander. Any member who uses a personally owned recorder for department-related activities shall comply with the provisions of this policy, including retention and release requirements, and should notify the on-duty supervisor of such use as soon as reasonably practicable.

Recordings shall not be used by any member for the purpose of embarrassment, harassment or ridicule.

422.6.1 PROHIBITED USE OF BIOMETRIC SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

The installation, activation, or use of biometric surveillance systems, including facial recognition, in connection with portable recorders is prohibited (Penal Code § 832.19).

Santa Ana Police Department

Santa Ana PD Policy Manual

Portable Audio Recorders

422.7 IDENTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION OF RECORDINGS

For direction as to the proper identification and preservation of records, refer to the Portable Digital Recording Devices Procedure.

422.8 RETENTION OF RECORDINGS

Recordings of the following should be retained for a minimum of two years (Penal Code § 832.18):

- (a) Incident involving use of force by an officer
- (b) Officer-involved shootings
- (c) Incidents that lead to the detention or arrest of an individual
- (d) Recordings relevant to a formal or informal complaint against an officer or the Santa Ana Police Department

Recordings containing evidence that may be relevant to a criminal prosecution should be retained for any additional period required by law for other evidence relevant to a criminal prosecution (Penal Code § 832.18).

All other recordings should be retained for a period consistent with the City's records retention schedule but in no event for a period less than 180 days.

Records or logs of access and deletion of recordings should be retained permanently (Penal Code § 832.18).

422.8.1 RELEASE OF AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDINGS

Requests for the release of audio/video recordings shall be processed in accordance with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.

422.9 REVIEW OF RECORDED MEDIA FILES

When preparing written reports, members should review their recordings as a resource (see the Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths Policy for guidance in those cases). However, members shall not retain personal copies of recordings. Members should not use the fact that a recording was made as a reason to write a less detailed report.

Supervisors are authorized to review relevant recordings any time they are investigating alleged misconduct or reports of meritorious conduct or whenever such recordings would be beneficial in reviewing the member's performance.

Recorded files may also be reviewed:

- (a) Upon approval by a supervisor, by any member of the Department who is participating in an official investigation, such as a personnel complaint, administrative investigation or criminal investigation.
- (b) Pursuant to lawful process or by court personnel who are otherwise authorized to review evidence in a related case.
- (c) By media personnel with permission of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

Santa Ana Police Department

Santa Ana PD Policy Manual

Portable Audio Recorders

- (d) In compliance with a public records request, if permitted, and in accordance with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.
- (e) By members of the City Attorney's office for litigation or other related matters.

All recordings should be reviewed by the Custodian of Records prior to public release (see the Records Maintenance and Release Policy). Recordings that unreasonably violate a person's privacy or sense of dignity should not be publicly released unless disclosure is required by law or order of the court.