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Body worn video cameras: The future for animal control compliance and enforcement?

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As the name implies, Body Worn Video (BWV) systems are self-contained video cameras that are worn on the officer's body.

The cameras record both video and audio to provide a very accurate record of incidents the officer attends including interactions with members of the public / offenders etc.

The technology was originally developed to enhance staff safety and while it was very effective in doing this, it also provided a number of other significant benefits (time / cost savings, enhanced staff professionalism etc)

BWV is extensively used in the UK with in excess of 60 agencies now utilising the technology.

In Australia and New Zealand numerous Central and Local Government agencies are now operationally using or trialling BWV systems.



"In the first 2 months we've had Reveal Media's cameras; our reported incidents of violence and aggression have decreased by 42% against the same period last year."

Enforcement Manager – Leeds City Council (UK)

The main benefits of this technology are:

ENHANCED STAFF SAFETY

- Reduced staff safety incidents (members of the public far less likely to behave in an abusive / aggressive manner if they know they are being recorded)
- Reduced physical harm / mental stress suffered by staff who may otherwise have been involved in a staff safety incident

TIME / COST SAVINGS (OWN AGENCY AND OTHERS)

- Reduced staff time preparing defended hearing files / appearing in Court due to increase in guilty pleas (the unit records exactly what took place which provides compelling evidence as to people's / animals behaviour and actions)

- Reduced cost to overall Justice system as a result of above
- Reduced time spent investigating complaints against staff (rather than having to interview / take statements from complainants, staff, witness etc from the outset, the video footage of the incident can be reviewed at the start of the investigation which may enable the complaint to be dealt with immediately)
- Particularly relevant for any 'use of force' (excessive) complaints (able to see exactly how the subject was behaving and how the staff member responded)

REDUCED COMPLAINTS

- Members of the public are far less likely to make vexatious / untruthful complaints against staff if they know the interaction between them and the staff member is being recorded

ENHANCED STAFF PROFESSIONALISM

- Staff aware their actions / language are also being recorded

- Footage able to be utilised for training / coaching purposes

REDUCED LIABILITY

- Assists in demonstrating your agencies commitment to taking all practical steps to provide a safe working environment

Using video recordings is not 'new' for compliance and enforcement agencies by any means. For many years agencies have utilised CCTV in metropolitan areas as well as 'in vehicle' systems which are permanently mounted in patrol vehicles. The other major use of video recording technology has been around systems used to record interviews (video interview machines).

What is reasonably new is the use of this technology as a body worn deployment option which allows for a far more flexible use of the technology over the traditional 'fixed' options (in car / interview machines etc).

Reveal media Body Worn Video systems

CERT Systems Limited has recently been appointed the Australasian Distributor for the UK based Reveal Media range of body worn video cameras and accessories as well as their award winning Digital Evidence Management Solution (DEMS) system.

RS3 -SX CAMERA



While there are numerous types of BWV systems available, we believe the Reveal Media cameras (and DEMS software) offer some significant advantages over other systems.

One of the major features the Reveal Media cameras offer is a unique forward facing screen that enables the member of the public to see themselves being recorded. This has a dramatic effect in 'modifying their behaviour' in a positive sense.

While with more covert models of camera you can verbally tell (warn) the person they are being recorded, having them able to actually see themselves 'on camera' has a far more powerful effect.

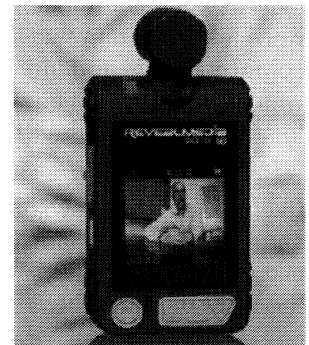
In addition to the standard body worn deployment, the Reveal Media cameras also offer the following deployment options.

VEHICLE MOUNT OPTION

- When combined with the vehicle window mount, the RS3 camera provides an 'in-car video' capability but with the added benefit of virtually immediate transition to a body worn deployment to capture interactions external to the vehicle.
- When used 'in vehicle' the camera can be used to capture video ahead (outside) of the patrol vehicle OR the camera lens may be rotated to record the inside of the patrol vehicle (transporting members of the public / prisoners etc) for the protection of staff

VIDEO INTERVIEW OPTION

- The camera can be used as a 'portable video interview machine' to record interviews with members of the public (suspected offenders, victims, witnesses etc) in any location. The camera can be sat on a table (or any other flat surface) and used to record the interview / statement.

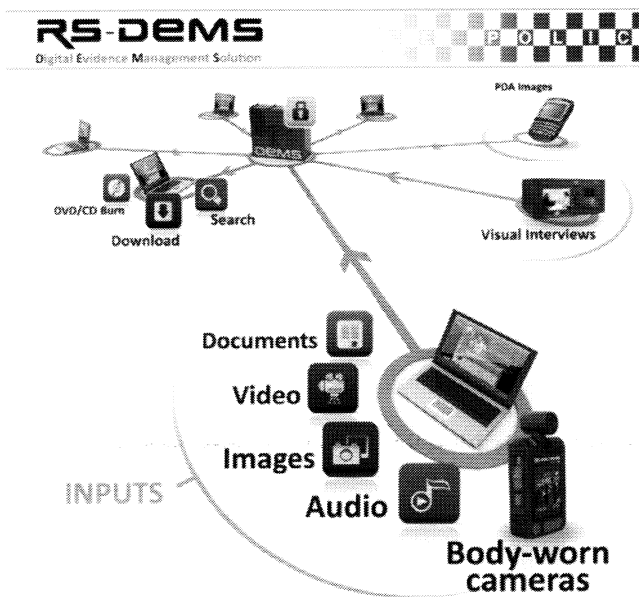


Reveal Media also offers the Digital Evidence Management Solution (DEMS) system for managing the footage recorded on the cameras.

DEMS is a fully integrated software system to provide agencies with an integrated BWV system.

A DEMS licence to upload / manage footage from Reveal Media cameras is provided with each camera supplied. Additional licences to enable ALL digital evidence (photographs, CCTV footage, digital dictaphone recordings, scanned documents etc) be managed by the DEMS system.

The DEMS system is intuitive to use and provides a full audit trail of all evidence managed by the system.



Body Worn Video projects in Aberdeen and Renfrewshire evaluation report

In a bid to reduce crime, increase guilty pleas and increase public confidence body worn cameras were introduced in two areas of Scotland. It is a comprehensive and ultimately fascinating report which should assist any organisation intending to start or expand their body worn camera programmes. Below is a summary of this report.

Overview: In Renfrewshire, 38 body worn video cameras were introduced in June 2009. This programme was reviewed by Strathclyde Police for the eight months between June 09 to Jan 10.

In Aberdeen, 18 body worn video cameras were introduced in June 2010 and reviewed after three months. The programme has been extended since.

Results for measured area:

- 60% reduction in Serious Assault
- 27% reduction in Minor Assault
- 29% reduction in Vandalism
- 19% reduction in Breach of the Peace
- 26% reduction total (compares to reduction of 1% in area as a whole)

In Renfrewshire, cases where body worn cameras were used were 80% less likely to go to the Sheriff court. In Aberdeen **no** cases involving body worn cameras went to court compared to the normal 18% of all cases that do.

There were seven complaints against the Police where body worn video was used. The footage recorded vindicated the officers in all cases.

In the nine months since the BWV project began, 61 officers' not wearing cameras have been assaulted and just one wearing body worn cameras were assaulted. (Statistically it would be expected to be 18)

In Aberdeen, 76% of people supported the use of body worn cameras and 57% said they believed it would make their community safer.

Value of changes:

- The 26% reduction in crime in the measured area in Aberdeen is estimated to have **saved £346,000 in three months (£1,386,472 per year)**

If you want to join the hundreds of other agencies utilising **Body Worn Video** technology to enhance staff safety, save time and money, reduce complaints and improve staff professionalism contact the Australasian distributor of **Reveal Media** cameras and **DEMS** software, **CERT Systems Limited**.

About the author

Brad Dannefaerd has 20 years experience as a Fisheries Enforcement Officer / Instructor in NZ. In 2007 he established CERT Systems, a private training and equipment supply company for the Compliance, Enforcement and Regulatory sectors.

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