

GETAC CASE STUDY WAKE COUNTY SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT

GETAC BODY WORN CAMERAS HELP PROVIDE DEPUTIES WITH MORE COMPLETE AND ACCURATE VIEWS OF INCIDENTS.

CHALLENGE

The primary objective was to develop and deploy a robust, easy-to-use body-worn camera solution that would complement the existing technological framework. This system needed to facilitate swift and efficient uploading, accessing, storing, and sharing of footage captured directly in the field. The goal was to replace manual, time-consuming processes with an automated, streamlined approach, enhancing overall operational efficiency and data management.

SOLUTION

The chosen solution involved the deployment of Getac BC-03 body-worn cameras. These devices were selected for their ability to effortlessly integrate with the pre-existing in-car video systems and the overall backend infrastructure. This strategic implementation aimed to ensure a harmonious and efficient combination of new and existing technologies, enhancing the overall system's effectiveness.

OUTCOMES + RESULTS

The implementation of the new system significantly enhanced the effectiveness of investigations. It improved the accuracy of evidence collection and the credibility of witness testimonies. Furthermore, this initiative led to substantial cost reductions in investigative processes. Notably, there was a decrease in reported injuries among officers and a decline in public grievances, indicating a positive impact on both operational efficiency and community relations.

OVERVIEW

The Wake County Sheriff's Office is the primary law enforcement agency for the unincorporated areas of Wake County, North Carolina. The Office serves its citizens and visitors by providing professional law enforcement, judicial and detention services that protect and preserve the constitutional rights of the people.

Its employees are committed to adhering to high standards of integrity, accountability, transparency and consistency in their working relationship with each other and with the community. The same high standards are applied to the investments the Office makes in the technology it uses to serve its community.

Major Chris Creech, who oversees the emergency communication center, information technology, property, evidence and criminal records, recognized the existing outdated body worn cameras were no longer compatible with the current operating systems. Major Creech supported the use of body worn cameras to help provide a more accurate view of an incident, aid in collecting evidence and witness testimonies, and ensure officer safety and integrity. Its existing solution, however, lacked the advanced functionality to support the officers' current needs.

The deputies needed an easy-to-use, lightweight, ergonomic body worn camera that would help them do their jobs better, easier and faster. They sought a solution that allowed them to upload video from the field or in the car without having to disconnect the device, dock it or interact with the hardware to access or share the footage. The current system required officers to download the videos after their shift onto multiple DVDs which significantly delayed the investigation process. The camera's hardware needed to be rugged enough to withstand extreme weather, rough handling and vibration while light enough to be worn comfortably for 10 to 12 hours each day. Because multiple people would be using the footage, the built-in software needed to sync with the existing in-car video system, on-premises data storage infrastructure and the department's computer-aided dispatch system.

INSPECTING AND TESTING THE OPTIONS

Natural investigators, the Sheriff and his team wanted to evaluate the best-in-class technologies that would accommodate all their requirements, provide a reliable solution that the end users and the community could count on at a cost that provided a high return on investment. The technical team turned to its longtime technology partner, GovDirect, to help define the requirements, identify the most appropriate options and manage the trials. The Office relied heavily on GovDirect as its technical and deployment teams had served and supported them well for years. GovDirect maintains a strong relationship with Getac and therefore is familiar with its technology and the high level of support Getac offers, so included the Getac BC-03 as part of the trial.

The Sheriff assembled a group of deputies and software engineers to conduct a trial for three different manufacturers' solutions that GovDirect selected. They wanted to test each solution not only for the requirements needed to get the job done but also for the software and functionality that would streamline workflows and increase productivity with little or no additional support. The deputies wanted to simulate a real-world trial to test the cameras and how they work with the backend systems and experience how the supports teams would work together in the future.



Because the teams at GovDirect and Getac successfully conducted video system trials and deployments for various law enforcement agencies over the years, the account manager at GovDirect trusted Getac to collaborate with him to find the right solution. So, Getac engaged a project manager, engineer and deployment manager to work with the GovDirect and Sheriff's Office teams to address each requirement and explore how to optimize each one.

For example, each law enforcement agency's uniforms and back-end systems are different. There is no one size fits all, so the teams worked together to come up with various mounting options to accommodate the officers' comfort and other equipment. The engineers collaborated as one team to fully understand the existing infrastructure to set up the integration as it would exist as deployed, so the deputies and IT staff could test how the proposed technology would work in realistic scenarios.

TECHNOLOGY + PARTNERSHIP = SUCCESS

During the trial, deputies were fully trained using the devices and software resulting in undisputed agreement on the improved user experience. Supervisors also participated since they use the video footage for performance reviews, policy and procedure compliance audits and training. The complete footage could be used to help correct less than desirable or incorrect actions or provide examples of best practices for new deputies.

The deputies, supervisors and engineers agreed that the Getac solution was by far the best solution and together with GovDirect delivered the most comprehensive support. The ergonomics, ruggedness and ease-of-use of the devices enabled the deputies to focus on the task at hand versus fussing with settings, physical adjustments or worrying the device would detach from their uniform. For example, the Getac camera could be set to automatically when a deputy turned on the blue lights to conduct a traffic stop.

The trial allowed for testing all the desired functionality before putting equipment in the field, making the deputy's job easy. Major Creech emphasized, "The built-in technology was superior to the existing system or any competitor." Officers could easily access and locate information as the software integrated with their existing computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system and the Getac in-car video system. Now, all one had to do was enter the CAD identification number and both the camera and in-car video footage would be instantly available to review. The built-in GPS also helped identify who exactly was present on the scene of a call.



BUILDING TRUST + CONFIDENCE WITH THE COMMUNITY

The Getac system also allowed the Office to respond faster to the community, enhance transparency between them and, when needed, provide a complete view of an event that might come under scrutiny in a complaint. The public can see exactly how officers handle a situation, individuals and groups because the video and audio are continual and complete rather than recorded from a bystander's sporadic clip from a smartphone.

One of the Office's commitments is to protect the constitutional rights of individuals including their privacy. The new camera system helps alleviate concerns when minors are involved, or when anyone is not fully clothed as the cameras respond to voice commands in addition to being easy to turn on and off physically. The Public Information Officer prioritizes informing the public, citizens and visitors alike, of the importance the Sheriff's Office places on protecting and serving its community including the use of vigorously vetted technology to support its efforts.

Each vehicle is equipped with a laptop, in-car video system with officers adding cameras to their uniform gear – all integrated to respond quickly, efficiently and effectively to a call for service. The rugged hardware is certified for reliability, low failure rates, long lifespans and compatibility to avoid operating and maintaining multiple systems. As a result, the community can witness the integrity of its law enforcement leaders to diligently use their tax dollars to save time and money.

BODY WORN CAMERAS HELP SAVE TIME, MONEY + LIVES

The investment and use of modern technology for the agency resulted in significant improvements in the time it takes to investigate an event whether a small infraction, lawsuit that goes to court or an internal affairs incident. With fewer resources needed, costs are also reduced. The number of reports of officer injury declined as did the number of use-of-force incidents. Officers believe, and can now prove, that the use of body worn cameras helps deter violent or questionably bad behavior.

Technology affects everyone in the community whether directly or indirectly. With over 400 Sheriff's Office vehicles armed with the most cost-effective, scalable and reliable technology, the Wake County residents can be assured that its well-protected and its financial contributions are well managed.

The combination of using in-car video and body cameras helps answer any questions that occur on scene quickly and accurately. – Dwayne Medlin, Wake County Sheriff's Office



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