Perceived benefits and concerns (Excerpt from *Police Officers Body-Worn Cameras*)

By: Michael D. White PhD

Citation: (White, Michael)

Table 2 provides a summary of the perceived merits and drawbacks of the technology. Such perceived benefits include enhanced transparency and legitimacy, improved behavior (citizen and officer), quicker resolution of complaints/lawsuits, improved evidence for arrest and prosecution and training opportunities. Critics of the technology have raised concerns about privacy (citizen and officer), officer health and safety, training and policy requirements and logistical/resource requirements. The next two sections describe each of the perceived benefits and concerns, as well as the available empirical evidence supporting or refuting each claim.

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| Concerns | Benefits |
| * Increased transparency and legitimacy | * Citizens’ privacy |
| * Improved police officer behavior | * Officers’ privacy |
| * Improved citizen behavior | * Officers’ health and safety |
| * Expedited resolution of complaints and lawsuits | * Training and policy requirements |
| * Improved evidence for arrest and prosecution | * Logistical and resource requirements, including data storage and retrieval |
| * Opportunities for police training |  |

Table 2. Perceived benefits and concerns with officer body-worn cameras

Fox 2 News Write-up

Citation (Fox 2 News)

Detroit is the last major city to implement body cameras on their police officers in the United States. Officers in its 11th precinct are already utilizing them as part of a test run, but other than that no other precinct in the city has them.   
  
And before the cameras are reality in the city of Detroit, lawmakers are already fighting over privacy issues. The main issue is what would be available for public viewing if an officer is on private property?

State Representative Jim Runestead says, "to make sure that the public's privacy is protected but also give the law enforcement department's the proper latitude to protect the public.  It's a balancing act and this bill accomplishes that.”

Some argue this is an issue of transparency.

Ron Scott, President of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality says police need to be transparent. Scott thinks the courts should decide.

"The bill requires the police department to retain that data for a certain period of time so that if someone feels that they do have a civil or criminal case they do have access to request a FOIA on that information," says Runestead.

Scott then adds that at some point information has to be open to the public.

One thing that is agreed on by Scott and Runestead is that some oversight is needed before any decision is to be made.

More local police departments may start using body-cams

By: McClathy Tribune (adapted by Newsela staff)

Citation: (McCathy Tribune)

WASHINGTON — At first, the police shooting triggered a public outcry. It looked as if it might lead to a full-blown crisis similar to the recent protests in Ferguson, Missouri.

The incident occurred in 2011, in Rialto, California. Police there shot and wounded a man who witnesses later insisted was unarmed. Outrage grew after cellphone video taken from a nearby balcony suggested that police had overreacted.

In the Ferguson case, it is still not clear why Officer Darren Wilson shot Michael Brown at least six times. In Rialto, however, things turned out differently simply because an  officer was wearing a small camera on his uniform.

The officer's camera revealed what was unseen from above: The suspect, who had bolted from his car and run into the street, was waving a handgun in the air.

The footage allowed police to defend themselves against allegations of excessive force. “We were very, very upset about how they reacted,” Captain Randy De Anda said of protesters. “We said, ‘If you want transparency, here are the actual facts.’”

## Large Departments Testing Cameras

Cop cameras are catching on around the nation, and their use will likely grow as the anger over Ferguson continues.

Body-worn cameras are usually placed on an officer’s chest, shoulder or cap. The Los Angeles Police Department is testing the cameras, and New York has announced plans to do so as well. The Justice Department is considering providing other police departments with funding for cameras.

Some local law enforcement agencies are resisting the campaign. Others, however, say that there are possible benefits, as seen in the Rialto case.

“If the public has this type of technology with cellphones and iPads, why not all the better that we have this resource for our officers too?” De Anda said.

## "Video Can Prove Or Disprove"

In Salt Lake City, for instance, an officer shot and killed a 20-year-old man on Aug. 11, two days after Brown was slain in Ferguson. In Utah, however, the officer was wearing a body camera. The video will probably play a key role in deciding whether the officer reacted inappropriately.

In Rialto, 120 officers were given cameras in early 2012. Since then, complaints of police abuse have dropped sharply.

According to California Congressman Adam B. Schiff, having a "video record of events" helps prevent "the use of excessive force." When it comes to allegations of police brutality, video can prove or disprove those claims, he added.

In Los Angeles, about 30 officers who patrol Skid Row, a dangerous neighborhood, have been testing various body camera models. The goal is to eventually purchase about 500 cameras.

The plan originated with Steve Soboroff, president of the commission that oversees the Los Angeles Police Department. On his first day as a commissioner last year, he said the cameras were important and vowed to raise funds to buy them. He has since raised more than $1 million.

Schiff said the cameras would more than pay for themselves because the videos would discourage false lawsuits against the police. “The savings can be quite dramatic, through improved community relations" and a drop in lawsuits, he said.

## Cameras Capture What Went Right, And Wrong

Such may be the result in the Salt Lake City shooting, according to local police officials.

“We’re just waiting for the prosecutor to finish his investigation and then we’ll release (the footage) as a public document,” Police Chief Chris Burbank said this week. The footage, he said, will show what happened "through the eyes of a police officer ... These cameras are capturing good work by law enforcement. If we’re doing something wrong, it will capture that too. But it is an advantage for all law enforcement — what the camera captures is a factual representation of what took place.”

Burbank said it started with 15 cameras two years ago, an idea born from his work as vice president of the Major Cities Chiefs Association. By the end of next month, about 440 officers will get cameras, he said. Around the country, he added, about a dozen cities use cameras.

In Rialto, the number of police use-of-force events dropped 66 percent the first year cameras were worn. In the second year, complaints against the police decreased 83.3 percent.

De Anda said they spent $100,000 on the cameras over the two years. The money went not only to purchase the devices — each cost about $1,200 — but also to run a website to store the images.

“We have had a big success,” De Anda said. “Great success.”