



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



**Video Evidence Retrieval**

Eff. Date 12/28/2021

**Purpose**

The Madison Police Department (MPD) realizes the increased role that video evidence plays in investigations of all scopes and types. This standard operating procedure (SOP) addresses the collection and disposition of video evidence from **external sources** in order to standardize the procedure department-wide. This SOP does not pertain to video evidence obtained from traffic, district interview rooms, and squad cameras. These video files are maintained by the city and can be preserved, saved, and copied by filling out a lab request.

**Procedure**

The following procedure addresses three major components of external video source collection and disposition:

- 1) Filling out the Video Retrieval Report Form
- 2) Property tagging of video surveillance evidence
- 3) Making copies of video surveillance evidence

**Filling out the Video Retrieval Report Form**

The purpose of the Video Retrieval Report Form is to ensure that a chain of custody for video evidence is sufficiently documented for prosecution purposes. This form is available on the MPD intranet in A-Z forms section (<https://www.cityofmadison.com/employeeNet/police/internal/forms/>). For the purposes of this SOP, the term “officer” applies to any commissioned MPD employee.

This form shall be utilized whenever an officer takes custody of video evidence or whenever video evidence is made available while conducting an investigation. The officer shall make a reasonable attempt to fill out the form in its entirety; however, it is understood that sometimes this will not be possible.

If an officer views surveillance video in the course of conducting an ongoing investigation, the officer shall document the viewing of that video and the contents observed in the narrative section of an official police report.

In situations where an officer is dispatched to retrieve video evidence from the originating source after the incident has occurred, the Video Retrieval Report Form will act as an officer’s report and shall be placed in the attachment tray to be scanned into the MPD Law Enforcement Records Management System (LERMS). No supplemental report will be needed in these situations.

**Property tagging of video surveillance**

When conducting any type of municipal, misdemeanor, or felony level investigation where video evidence collection is warranted:

**All collected video evidence for any type of investigation must be assigned a property tag number and placed into evidence by the collecting officer.**

The purpose for this action is to maintain a chain of custody for these items because they are potentially evidence documenting either municipal ordinance violations or criminal acts. **If a primary officer requests video surveillance for an investigation, the primary officer should attempt to make arrangements to retrieve their own video.** If that is not possible, then an additional responding officer will collect the video evidence, place it into evidence, and fill out the Video Retrieval Report Form.

## **Making copies of video surveillance**

### **The criteria for making copies is as follows:**

- For all felony level and other major cases, a working copy of the surveillance video shall be made and placed in either the command post (if there is one) or in a district tray specifically designated to hold such copies for assigned detectives. If an officer does not have the ability to copy the video, the reason should be noted on the Video Retrieval Report Form. If the officer does not know how to copy the video, training will be provided at their request.
- For cases that do not meet the threshold described above, copies do not need to be made; however, it is however expected that the original evidence shall still be placed in property, shall be assigned a property tag number, and the officer shall complete the Video Retrieval Report Form.

Original SOP: 05/19/2016

(Reviewed Only: 01/09/2017, 12/26/2017, 01/30/2019, 01/31/2020, 01/11/2021, 01/31/2023)

(Revised: 12/28/2021)