



PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF POLICE BOOSTS BODY-WORN CAMERA POLICY COMPLIANCE WITH AXON PERFORMANCE

SITUATION OVERVIEW

The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police (PBP) serves approximately 310,000 residents across 55 square miles in the bustling city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A few years ago, like many agencies nationwide, PBP rolled out a body-worn camera (BWC) program to their 750 sworn officers. The purpose of this program was to foster increased transparency with the community and improved accountability among staff.

THE CHALLENGE: OVERCOMING RESISTANCE AND LOW ACTIVATION RATES

Many agencies struggle with low BWC activation rates, especially when rolling out this technology for the first time. This is due to a number of factors. Many officers are skeptical of the technology, while others simply have not developed the muscle memory to activate their camera. Chief of Police Larry Sciroto saw the value BWCs could bring to PBP, so he set out to improve the department's perspective on this technology. He set out to not just increase BWC usage, but also demonstrate the technology's value to his officers.

THE SOLUTION: AXON PERFORMANCE AND A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

In September 2022, PBP implemented Axon Performance to help shift how the agency viewed and utilized BWCs. Axon Performance analyzes key body-worn camera data, including activation rates, to provide a clear view of officer activity. These insights help agencies identify areas for improvement, streamline workflows and ensure that policies are being followed.

Assistant Chief Ragland used Axon Performance to continuously share positive BWC use cases and commend officers who regularly used the technology.

“As officers saw how Axon Performance supported their work — by highlighting good practices and helping them improve — we saw concern diminish. Transparency and data-driven insights helped ease initial fears.”

— CHIEF SCIROTTO

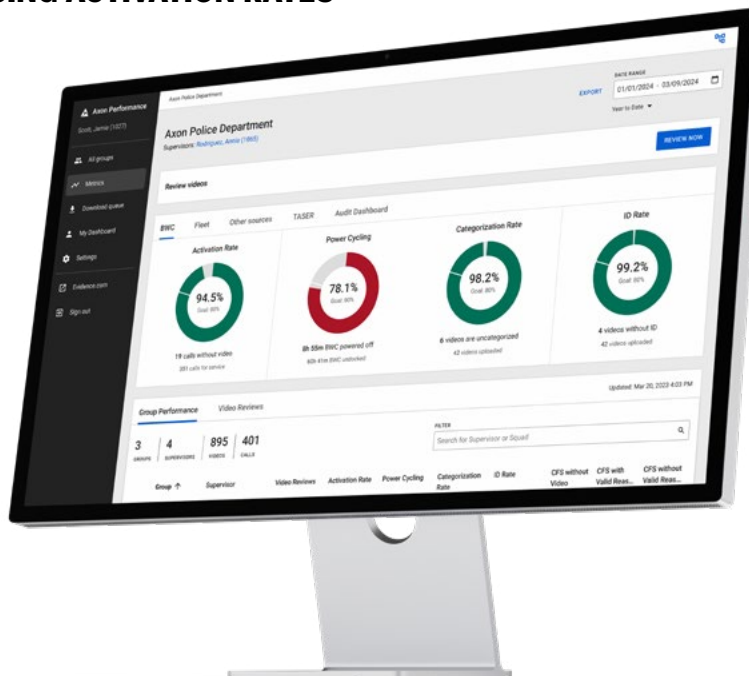


This thoughtful strategy helped cultivate a sense of transparency and trust between leadership and staff which gradually encouraged reluctant officers to see BWCs as valuable tools for their protection. “I was even skeptical at first, but I’m a big believer in it now,” shared Detective Shane Welsh. “I don’t think you should do anything without a camera on you, because I’ve seen just how much it helps us by showing the truth between interactions.”

THE RESULTS: A CULTURAL SHIFT AND RISING ACTIVATION RATES

The impact of Axon Performance on PBP has been remarkable. The agency’s BWC activation rate surged from 35% to 65% in less than a year. The agency has also seen an increase in the number of complaints against officers they are able to exonerate or dismiss thanks to video evidence from BWC.

“Everybody’s getting better just on their own,” observed Detective Welsh. “They compete with their peers by wanting better numbers. We call it self-policing. I think it’s a big culture change from what we’ve been used to as cops. It’s a statistic that supports and proves that they are doing good things.”



The visual nature of the Performance dashboard helps feed this sense of healthy competition. “We want those pie charts to be green and not red. If I was back on patrol, nothing would make me happier than to show my peers my numbers. It gives you an opportunity to be proud, poke fun, and support each other to do better, and that’s what the Chief wants. He wanted us to recognize that on our own.”

Axon Performance also provided leadership with data insights that led to tangible policy changes and training opportunities. For instance, seeing who was (or was not) using their cameras allowed leadership to facilitate training conversations and reevaluate their BWC activation policy requirements to ensure best practices and enhance accountability.

CONCLUSION

Looking ahead, Assistant Chief Ragland sees even more potential. “The Axon Ecosystem has all the puzzle pieces.” With Axon Performance, PBP is not just increasing its BWC activation rates; it’s building a culture of transparency, responsibility and continuous improvement.

PBP demonstrates how the right technology, coupled with strong leadership and a willingness to embrace change, can transform a department’s approach to policing. It’s a testament to the power of how data-driven solutions, such as Axon Performance, can help police departments modernize to protect more lives in more places.

