



TRIBAL INSIGHTS

THE SMALL RURAL TRIBAL BODY-WORN CAMERA PROGRAM

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Key Considerations for Tribal Law Enforcement: Cloud or On-Premises BWC Storage

Decisions around body-worn camera storage (BWC) require Tribal law enforcement agencies to consider security, cost, and long-term sustainability when evaluating cloud-based and on-premises solutions.

One major consideration for Tribal law enforcement is ensuring BWC footage remains secure and fully under agency control. With cloud-based storage, video files are uploaded to servers maintained by the BWC vendor, which may limit the agency's direct control over data access and management.

On-premises storage keeps all footage on servers owned and managed by the agency on site. This allows for full control over access and security protocols. For Tribal agencies, maintaining ownership of BWC footage is often a top priority, not only for evidence management, but also to ensure compliance with tribal sovereignty.

While on-premises storage gives Tribal law enforcement greater control over their footage, this level of control comes with significant upfront costs, including the purchase of servers, networking equipment, backup systems, and storage hardware.

Agencies are also responsible for ongoing maintenance, software updates, and IT staffing, which can add to long-term operational costs.



Cloud-based storage allows agencies to avoid large upfront costs hardware investments. Agencies pay an annual subscription fee based on the amount of storage needed, while the vendor manages backups and security maintenance. This can reduce the burden on internal IT staff and provide scalable storage that grows with the agency's needs.

While tribal agencies carefully consider these factors when implementing storage solutions through cloud-based platforms or internal servers, long-term sustainability is often jeopardized due to stagnant budgets to meet evidence demands. A report by Michigan State University (MSU) and Justice & Security Strategies (JSS) found that agencies frequently expressed concern about maintaining digital evidence management (DEM) systems as their BWC programs grow, particularly given the rising volume

volume of footage generated from routine calls for service (report linked [HERE](#)). Without reliable DEM infrastructure, even well-established BWC programs risk becoming non-operational.

Another key challenge for Tribal agencies is the lack of standardized policies for video retention, purging, and access. Without clear guidelines, agencies may struggle to manage growing volumes of BWC footage, maintain and ensure that footage is accessible when needed.

Choosing a suitable storage solution for BWC footage requires Tribal agencies to carefully balance security, cost, and long-term sustainability. Tribal law enforcement must understand these factors and plan proactively to ensure their BWC program remains functional and aligned with tribal priorities.

Apply now for body-worn cameras! Click [HERE](#) for more information.



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