



## **Police shootings highlight concerns about body cameras**

*Investigation in Chicago to see if camera was on*

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A cop in the nation's third-largest city fatally shot a black teenager in the back after a police chase through Chicago's South Side.

The body camera worn by the Chicago police officer failed to record the shooting of Paul O'Neal. The 18-year-old was suspected of stealing a car that struck the officer's vehicle during the chase late last week, according to police.

Whether the crash affected the camera's ability to record is under investigation, police said. Investigators are also looking into whether the officer had turned it on. Three officers have been stripped of their police powers. The department's body-camera policy explicitly states what incidents must be filmed.

"Policies are only as good as the disciplinary procedures," said Harlan Yu, a principal at Upturn, which provides Internet expertise for policymakers on a range of social issues.

"Yes, Chicago has what appears to be a great policy that lists all the kinds of incidents that police officers need to have their camera on for. But in the shooting of Paul O'Neal it appears that this officer violated the policy. Now the question is what happens to this officer and what disciplinary procedures will there be so that officers will comply with policies in place."

The shooting is the latest to highlight concerns over the burgeoning use of body cameras as a way to increase transparency and accountability. Here's what you need to know:

As of this month, 42 of 68 "major city" police departments in the United States have body-worn camera programs with policies in place, according to a "Policy Scorecard" released this week by the activist Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and Upturn.

Researchers looked at the 68 departments in the Major Cities Chiefs Police Association, which includes the country's 50 most populous cities.

In addition, three other departments -- Aurora, Detroit and Pittsburgh -- appear to have cameras on the ground but have not released body cam policies to the public, according to the scorecard.

The chorus for the use of body cameras gained strength nationally after the August 2014 police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

Last year, President Barack Obama proposed \$75 million for cameras, with the federal government matching up to 50% of what state and local agencies spend. The program was expected to pay for 50,000 body cameras over three years.

Calls for police body cameras have grown as a way to increase transparency and deal with police brutality. But the cameras are not a panacea, according to observers.

"There has been an assumption that with body cameras suddenly we have accountability," Yu said.

"But through experiences in Chicago, Baton Rouge and in Baltimore County, we're seeing a stark contrast between what people expect from cameras and what they can actually do."

In Louisiana, a black man named Alton Sterling was shot several times last month while being held on the ground by police outside a Baton Rouge convenience store. There was body footage of the shooting but the cameras were dislodged, police said.

"That footage may not be as good as we hoped for," Baton Rouge police Lt. Johnny Dunham said.

On Monday, in Baltimore County, Maryland, Korryn Shandawn Gaines, 23, was shot and killed after a seven-hour standoff with police. A 5-year-old boy next to her was wounded. Gaines was armed with a shotgun she pointed at police and attempted to livestream the incident.

The 1,900-officer department launched a \$12.5 million body camera program last month to equip 1,435 cops with the devices over the next two years, said Elise Armacost, Baltimore County spokeswoman for police, fire and emergency management.

Ten officers a week are being trained on the 150 cameras in the first phase of the program, Armacost said.

None of the officers at Monday's shooting was wearing a camera, she said.

Obama last year cautioned against expecting easy answers to help ease tensions between communities and law enforcement. At the time, a national policing task force recommended, among other things, greater use of body cameras.

"There's been a lot of talk about body cameras as a silver bullet or a solution," Obama said.

"The task force concluded that there is a role for technology to play in building additional trust and accountability, but it's not a panacea. It has to be embedded in a broader change in culture and a legal framework that ensures that people's privacy is respected and that not only police officers but the community themselves feel comfortable with how technologies are being used."

In January, the U.S. Justice Department announced the indictment of former Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department officer Richard Thomas Scavone on charges he violated the civil rights of a woman by using excessive force during an arrest a year earlier. He was also charged with obstructing justice for falsifying a report. He goes on trial October 25.

Scavone grabbed the unidentified woman around the neck with his hand and threw her to the ground, according to the indictment. The former officer then struck the woman in the forehead with an open palm and slammed her head onto the hood of his patrol car, officials said.

The eight-year police veteran was also charged with misdemeanor battery after the police department reviewed his body-camera video, which recorded the alleged assault, CNN affiliate KLAS-TV reported.

Last year, Albuquerque, New Mexico, police officers Keith Sandy and Dominique Perez were charged with first-degree murder in connection with the 2014 shooting of a homeless man.

James Boyd, 38, spent the night before his shooting in a shelter, but when the shelter closed for the winter, Boyd tried to camp in the hills above the city, officials said. Overnight camping there is illegal.

Helmet and body cameras worn by dozens of city police who converged on the campsite showed Boyd with two small knives in his hands. At one point, Boyd turned his back to the officers and they began firing.

Officers fired a shotgun and nonlethal beanbag pellets at Boyd, while others were caught on camera throwing flash-bang grenades. The video also showed one officer unleashing his German shepherd. Helmet cameras show Boyd wheezing for breath after the assault. He died later at a hospital.

The officers go on trial next month, according to CNN affiliate KOAT-TV.

A 2014 study conducted by the University of Cambridge Institute of Criminology -- based on a 12-month trial in Rialto, California -- found that body-worn cameras reduced the use of force by 59% and complaints against officers by 87%.

"Body cameras may play a role in improving police officers' and citizens' behavior, but reforms to use-of-force policy and training need to be implemented in addition to body camera

deployment if police conduct is to significantly change for the better," Matthew Feeney, a policy analyst at the Cato Institute, wrote in a blog post for the Washington-based think tank.

In the O'Neal shooting in Chicago, the department is investigating why the body camera didn't record, according to department spokesman Anthony Guglielmi.

The officer recently received the camera, Guglielmi said. Officers had received their body cams within the previous eight to 10 days, CNN affiliate WLS-TV in Chicago reported.

O'Neal's death comes two years after the city was rocked by the Laquan McDonald shooting, which left a Chicago officer facing a murder charge after more than a yearlong delay in releasing dashboard camera footage.

Yes. According to the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and Upturn report, some police departments have established procedures to allow people seeking to file a police misconduct complaint to view body cam footage.

Departments in Cincinnati, Chicago, Parker, Colorado and Washington have procedures that provide special access to people who are recorded during encounters with police, according to the report.

"Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia expressly allows a recorded individual to request to view footage," according to the report. "The policy also, commendably, clearly lays out the process of requesting to view relevant footage, and is one of the few policies we have seen that does so."

After civil rights groups voiced concerns about privacy and surveillance, some departments have begun to include limits on the use of biometric technologies like facial recognition. They include departments in Baltimore, Baltimore County, Boston, Cincinnati, Montgomery County, Maryland, and Parker, Colorado.

"Boston PD sharply limits the use of facial recognition technologies, going even further to mandate that cameras will not include any 'technological enhancements,'" according to the report. "This policy is unique among the major department policies we've reviewed."

The report said none of the 68 departments it looked at fully met the criteria for the eight categories it used to evaluate body cam programs.

The eight categories: that the department makes its policy publicly and readily available, limits officer discretion on when to record, addresses personal privacy concerns, prohibits officer prereport viewing, limits retention of footage, protects footage against tampering and misuse, makes footage available to individuals filing complaints, and limits the use of biometric technologies.

The report said 13 departments were able to fulfill the criteria in more than two categories. Ferguson and Fresno, California, failed on every measure, according to the report.

The researchers said a "concerning nationwide trend" was the absence at every police department of a "blanket limitation on officer review of footage before filing an initial written incident report."

But six department policies have partial prohibitions in place for serious incidents such as officer-involved shootings.

"This is a major accountability problem with all body camera programs as it's vital to preserve the officer's recollection and the body camera footage as independent records," the report said.

"When officers view camera footage before filing their reports, there's a real danger of reports reflecting only what cameras happened to record, rather than what the officer actually experienced."

Three departments have not released their body camera policies to the public, researchers said.

"These police departments are enhancing surveillance of innocent people throughout their cities with no accountability for how the footage is used, when the cameras must be turned off or on, if they're videotaping victims during incredibly personal and sensitive moments, or what, if any, consequences there would be for officers using their cameras inappropriately," according to the report.

But the facts, along with the disparity in how each case is handled, do not provide a solid answer on whether body cameras are the answer to curbing excessive uses of force by police in America. In fact, they seem to demonstrate that these are complicated issues that won't likely be resolved by a simple camera on a cop's body.