

BUILT FOR THE JOB: HOW TO CHOOSE A BODY-WORN CAMERA

Three questions to ask when choosing a body-worn camera to suit the rugged conditions facing law enforcement

By Panasonic Arbitrator Body-worn Camera Product Manager and former Police Officer John Cusick.

Before you calculate the real cost of equipment failure, consider three ramifications when a body-worn camera malfunctions in the field.

LOSS OF EVIDENCE: This can happen when the body-worn camera fails to record while a suspect provides a key piece of evidence and your department is counting on the camera to accurately document this incident.

RISK OF LAWSUIT: For example, let's say an officer's body camera fails during a traffic stop turned confrontational. The arresting officer is accused of unnecessary force and faces a multi-million-dollar lawsuit. Upon review of the camera's recording of the incident, you realize the camera has failed, and the ability to provide video and evidentiary backup is gone.

LOSS OF CREDIBILITY: Consider the scenario of an officer who swears they turned the camera on before an altercation that has created community concern. Unfortunately, when they return to the precinct, there is no footage. The equipment failed to record and the community raises questions. "Is the officer telling the truth? Can we trust the department?" the community wonders.

These are issues that no law enforcement agency wants to face. When Panasonic collaborated with police departments across the country to design its new MK-3 body-worn camera, it was concerns like these that we heard over and over. Panasonic product designers and manufacturing experts — in fact, everyone on the team — took these concerns to heart. The result: the MK-3 Arbitrator body-worn camera is designed, manufactured and tested to meet the needs of the most harrowing of situations officers face on duty.

In a study released December 2015 by the Major Cities Chiefs Association and Major County Sheriffs' Association, 95% of the 70 precincts surveyed said they were "moving forward" with BWC programs. As video evidence capture is becoming a standard for law enforcement agencies, Panasonic's Arbitrator MK-3 is designed to provide officers with courtroom-ready evidence, promote streamlined adjudication and strengthen community relations while adhering to local and federal regulations.

As police departments new to BWC's grapple with tough issues, such as recording policy and who should see footage, it's important that technical failures don't become yet another challenge. Here are three questions to consider when choosing a body-worn camera to help ensure officers in the field keep their focus on the tasks at hand and not on tech functionality.



1. Did its product developers receive specific input from law enforcement professionals?



It's no secret that law enforcement officials face a myriad of extreme and complex situations. In the case of BWCs, law enforcement needs to be able to rely on the camera to capture clear images in harsh and imperfect circumstances such as darkness or a rigorous on-foot pursuit.

It's important that the person making the purchase decision knows their tools have been manufactured to specifically meet the needs of law enforcement professionals. This way they can focus on their duties without concern for malfunctioning technology and cumbersome operation while, at the same time, allowing device configuration that help maintain tactical safety.

This means employing extreme wide angle lenses and sophisticated image sensors that can provide fidelity in low-light situations as well as image stabilizers that keep the image still while the officer is on the move. The camera's ease of use, light-weight design, lack of audible warning tones and adjustable lighting within the unit are key. Audio clarity and the ability to accurately and clearly capture voices is paramount.

2. Was the body-worn camera manufactured to stand up to tough conditions?

In building the Arbitrator MK-3, Panasonic's designers not only collaborated with law enforcement across the country, but also applied lessons gleaned from 20 years of making ToughBooks and other rugged products for people in public safety. Panasonic is the top U.S. provider of rugged mobile devices for law enforcement and first responders.

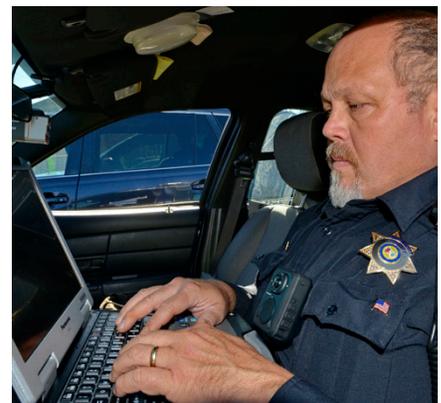
And ToughBooks' ability to hold up under challenging circumstances is well documented.

Here's what one sheriff experienced: "When officers went through the vehicle after the fire, the Panasonic Toughbook 31 was recovered and, while it had extensive smoke damage, the screen was still visible and it boot up," he said. "The fact that the fire melted most of the items in the car, including a shot gun, and the Toughbook could still power back on is a testament to its durability."

The Arbitrator MK-3 uses a similar tough frame. It also pairs perfectly with The Arbitrator 360 HD dashboard camera, which records in full HD, 1080p and has an unparalleled ability to capture and view footage in a full 360 degrees.

A sergeant at Fort Huachuca in Arizona said in a Panasonic case study that his department deployed a combination of ToughBooks and Arbitrator 360 dash-cams. "All of this technology has improved field operations and made everything much more streamlined," he said. "The system is there to protect our officers, and it has helped tremendously in decreasing unwarranted litigation, which has proved to be a great asset to our lawyers as well."

The new Arbitrator MK-3 is designed as integral part of the Toughbook Arbitrator 360 dash-cam combination, and another way to help officers during their shifts.



3. Is the device tested to military standards?

When it comes to equipment, claims of durability are common. To corroborate its statements, Panasonic puts its products through a series of rigorous tests. The Arbitrator MK-3 has been tested to and met the Ip67 dust- and water-proof standard and MIL-STD-810G, the Military Standard set by the United States and approved for use of all its agencies and departments by the Department of Defense. MIL-STD-810G emphasizes test practices that are accountable to the kinds of environments the equipment will face during its military service, and police officers face on the job.

Products that have passed this certification have endured the Panasonic robustness drop test, which includes dropping the item from a height of 6 feet on to a concrete floor 37 times.

To test its ability to remain waterproof in the most adverse of conditions, MIL-STD-810G dictates that the product be able to sustain being blasted it 5.8 inch-per-hour rain and 70 mph winds for a half-hour while remaining operational. Speaking of water, the equipment also passes the ingress protection IP67 submersion test.

The product must also undergo the Panasonic Battery Reliability Test. In this sequence, the camera is penetrated by a nail that is 1/8 of an inch in diameter and traveling at a speed of just under an inch per second.

Before equipment makes its way to law enforcement, the camera also undergoes a dust-proof test, operating temperature test and UV ray radiation test. Panasonic then takes that test data and translates it into something tangible for the end user. For instance, the drop test — in which the product is dropped 37 times from 6 feet — equates to that technology falling off a 6-foot-tall individual, which takes on special significance for the department's BWCs.

This approach to testing, one in which controlled experiments are used to simulate very real situations, helps Panasonic close the loop: This product has been designed, manufactured and tested — from beginning to end — with law enforcement in mind.



To learn more about BWCs, read details about the study by the [Major Cities Chiefs Association and Major County Sheriffs' Association](#).