

Police body cameras - hold that thought!

By Tanya Crites

Many law enforcement agencies across the country are struggling with the decision to implement the use of body cameras worn by law enforcement officers on the job. WCIA has received many requests for advice from members who, 1) are currently using body cameras, 2) had implemented a body camera program but have now discontinued their use, or 3) see the value in body cameras and want to use them. The Washington State Legislature is currently considering a number of bills to address law enforcement's use of body cameras. These bills address several issues, including what the video footage can be used for, the privacy concerns of recording individuals without their permission and disclosure of the video as a public record while protecting the identities of citizens in the video. Until we know the outcome of these important issues, WCIA's advice to our members on the implementation of a body camera program is wait, watch and see.

On a similar topic, WCIA supports law enforcement dash-cam video recording. The footage has been useful in defending officer enforcement actions and use of force allegations, as well as discrediting allegations of misconduct. Depending on what legislation passes regarding the use of body cameras, we could find the same value in their use. Once this legislative session is over and a law is passed (if any) governing law enforcement's use of body cameras, WCIA will issue a Risk Bulletin to the membership with our risk management best practice recommendations.