

Body & Car Camera Video Storage Dilemma



Presented by
CJIS Solutions

The new wave pushing law enforcement into unfamiliar areas – technology.



Car cameras are nothing new. They've been around since the late 90's and originally used VHS tapes (as in the type for a VCR!). Early adopters had rooms of tapes of videos stored from cars that were subject to regular state record retention schedules.

The internet was just developing into main stream, police departments were still using typewriters, and there were only a few camera companies making solutions for our industry.

Flash forward to today. Social media has law enforcement under a microscope and every company with a few extra dollars is running around making body and car cameras. In 2000 you had to choose from only 3 or 4 camera vendors. Today, there's hundreds of vendors and hundreds of storage options.

Do you keep the data in house? Do you 4G upload? Do you dock? Use WiFi? Cloud only? Hybrid? And none of it is in a language that law enforcement understands.

The first step isn't a vendor!

Some agencies run in, make a policy, then struggle to find a vendor to meet that policy. Some agencies run in, find a vendor, and then struggle to make a policy around the solution. The first step a decision maker should take is to find out your state's legal records retention requirements. Most agencies get cameras but don't find out what they're really required to permanently store until it's too late. This should always be the first step before picking a vendor that will skyrocket the project's costs.

Let me explain in more detail as to why this is so critical. If your state says "any record created must be held for 7 years" then you probably don't want to select a body camera vendor that records from the second the unit is turned on until it's turned off. If that officer drives around for 8 hours, and only does one MV stop for 10 minutes, you now have 7 hours and 50 minutes of video you're required to store AND pay for that's essentially useless. Instead, pick a vendor that records on an action and stops on an action. Now that same 8 hour shift only stores the 10 minutes of video (not including any pre/post record you may want to add). THAT will drastically change a storage cost.

Most states without set camera laws are siding with regular retention schedules. So if a case has a 7 year retention, so does the video. If a case has an infinite retention like a homicide, so does the video.

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The Vendor Game!

So Many Vendors – So Many Options

Let's move forward and say you've figured out your policy. You figured out your camera options and features. Now what do you do with the storage? This is just as tricky and everyone out there will try to back you into a corner one way or another. When selecting a vendor, a key feature is one that is not strapped to a cloud offering, not strapped to an onsite offering, but can do any option in the same solution.

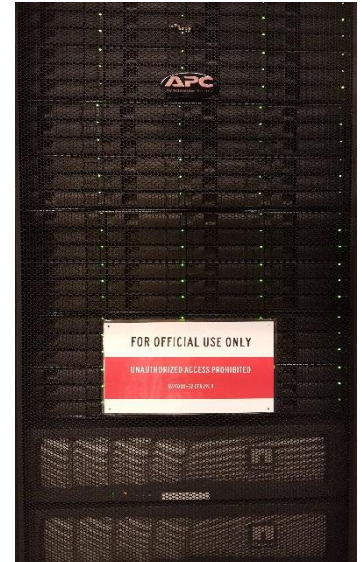
There are a few significant factors you need to keep in mind:

- Cloud only vendors may make their files a proprietary format which may mean added costs and migration concerns should you ever change vendors. There are also a lot of hidden costs in "unlimited storage" fees. Meaning sure, the storage may be unlimited for a flat rate, but downloading and/or uploading is extra. Technically they didn't lie and you're left with a fluctuating budget.

There's also limitations with integration as you may be unable to tie other products or operations (such as CAD/RMS or other evidence products) into the vendor's cloud environment.

- On premise only is another concern. Unless you're comfortable keeping all your data in one place and being able to handle rapid expansion or growth, this is a tricky option. Yes, we all know the Chief who wants to keep that data in house because of trust issues. You can't play that game with video storage. Cameras record at a high resolution, the more incidents your agency has the more storage you need. The more cases you have, the more you have to hold for longer periods of time. Remember the VHS tapes in rooms? The same holds true for storage systems. Except you need to pay for their power!
- Hybrid solutions are a great option and thinking about incorporating a time factor into your policy is an even better option. This is where you have a blend of on premise storage and off site storage. When we talk about a time factor, we're talking about designing your policy with a requirement that all video, no matter what it is, remains in house on a storage system for about 30 days let's say. That 30th day and 1 second, it moves up to the cloud storage. This will allow you to do all your viewing, saving, case management in house without killing your bandwidth or racking up transfer fees while leveraging the scalable cloud storage fabric for your longer term storage. Plus, because the storage is on site, your activities will not be subject to bandwidth limitations from a cloud provider.

A vendor that doesn't restrict you also gives you options if you do want to utilize your own cloud storage, on premise only storage, mix of the two, or any other ideas. It makes migrations easier, vendor changes easier, and provides more control over your data.



You're not fully protected!

Now that you have your camera solution figured out, how do you plan on PROTECTING THE DATA? That's right, storing the files are one problem, now you need to back them up. They're a government record like every other arrest file, photo, memo, and so on. Therefore, you need to protect your important videos such as the ones that generate cases like arrests, homicides, assaults, etc the same way you protect your CAD/RMS data.

- **Replication is NOT backup!** – Some vendors, mostly cloud, will tell you that your data is replicated. That doesn't mean it's backed up. Replicated simply means that there's 2 copies. But it also means that if you delete a file, the second copy is deleted too. If the file is corrupted, changed, altered, so is the second copy. Data backup copies that file, moves it to a new location, and it's never touched again until you need to restore it. No matter what you do to the original file, that data backup copy will always be there for recovery.
- **Media isn't forever!** – Saving to DVD's or other media is only temporary. They're subject to damage, scratching, being lost, and the environment in which they are stored effects their age. Also, there's no way to verify the data until you need it again. An accelerated aging study at NIST estimated the life expectancy of one type of DVD-R for authoring disc to be 30 years if stored at 77°F and 50% relative humidity. This testing for R discs is in the preliminary stages, and much more needs to be done.

Data Backup!

A proper data backup solution is the true way to cover yourself when all else fails. It's inexpensive and works. Data backup from CJIS Solutions comes in all shapes and sizes and CJIS Solutions offers multiple approaches to data backup and can save your files before you're wondering where they went. You can't restore what you don't have so the worst thing you can possibly do is wait.

This white paper has been created to help agencies who are new to the body and car camera video storage wave. We've been there in our own departments and have experience in dealing with the very same dilemmas. We have seen the victory of a restore as we have the anguish of defeat when an agency calls who doesn't have backup. No matter what you choose, data backup should be a part of your project!

DO NOT WAIT – CONTACT US TODAY SO WE CAN PROTECT YOUR DEPARTMENT'S FILES!



CJIS Solutions, LLC

P.O. Box 1102

Little Falls, NJ 07424-1102

855-955-CJIS

www.CJISolutions.com



Sales@CJISolutions.com