

Berkeley Copwatch

Copwatching during a Protest

The following information is intended to help you be an effective observer of police conduct. Remember that there will be lots of recordings made. The ones that will help to defend people against false charges and be used in lawsuits later will be those that:

- Identify location, date and time
- Identify the person taking the video (**YOU!**)
- Are **NOT** edited or altered in any way

Assert Your Rights

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**NLG: Inquiries
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(415) 909-4654

**NLG: Collect
calls from jail**
(415) 285-1011



Probable cause: Individuals may not be arrested based on their association with a crowd in which unlawful activity has occurred. There must be probable cause for each individual arrest.

Tips for Recording the Police

1. PRESERVE VIDEO EVIDENCE

For your footage to be useful in court, it will have to be unedited. It cannot be "anonymously" presented into evidence.

2. FOCUS ON POLICE

You don't want footage that can be used to prosecute protesters. Keep your camera focused on **POLICE** behavior. Some protesters become agitated when their actions are recorded. **Be aware.**

3. RIGHT TO WATCH

Assert your right to observe. Remember, you **do not** have the right to interfere, but you **DO** have the right to document.

4. CUT THE EDITORIAL

Be aware of what you say while you are recording. Your commentary can influence the way that people and juries perceive what is happening in the video, and swearing and yelling may bias a jury against the person.

5. LOCATION, DATE AND TIME

Date and time stamp footage while you are filming, or say it on tape. Tape location identifiers such as street signs.

6. KEEP YOUR CAMERA

Cops cannot take your phone without a warrant. Do not let them have your camera or phone. Don't resist physically, but don't consent to giving your belongings to them. Use a passcode on your phone, not face ID or touch ID.

7. SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

As a way to stay safe, have a partner to work with at protests. It is helpful to have someone watching "the big picture" while you are focused on recording so that you can move quickly if the situation changes and police are approaching, etc.

Checklist for Documenting Police

What to Look Out For at a Protest



Detailed description of police misconduct (verbal abuse, wrongful arrest, excessive force, # of officers & vehicles, departments present). Note failure to warn, refusal to allow dispersal, etc.



Name and affinity group of the victim(s) if possible.



Witnesses' names, addresses, emails and phone numbers (including other videographers).



Officer's name, rank, department and badge number. Note the commanding officer.



Are body cams on? Look for a small green or red light (red means its recording).



Which police equipment/weapons were used and how. Describe or document them. For example, protesters drenched with pepper spray, tear gas canisters fired at persons (rather than onto the street), horses or vehicles run into people, etc.



License plate, police agency and ID number of police vehicles, as well as private cars moving through the demonstration that are being used by police.



Statements made by police (particularly commanding officers) and civil officials. Whether orders or warnings were audible and/or intelligible.



Routes taken by demonstrators and police. **RECORD THE TIME AND INTERSECTION** frequently. This is important for creating a framework for the footage and evidence after the protest is over.

STAY SAFE AND ASSERT YOUR RIGHTS

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