COP

A Handbook for

WATCH



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AN INTRODUCTION TO CITIZEN MONITORING OF THE POLICE

Important Note:

This handbook is not a substitute for a training session. All members of COPWATCH who wish to go into the streets must attend a training session.

COPWATCH

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COPWATCH MISSION

COPWATCH is a non-violent, non-confrontational citizen advocacy organization. We strive to help end police misconduct, brutality, and abuse of power through direct observation of the police in the streets, and advocating for their victims after the event.

We take it upon ourselves to police the police. While we know it is impossible to be at the scene of every situation with the police, we intend to be in the streets at times when police misconduct is most probable. We will document on paper and on film as much of the police activity as we can.

We will build a reputation as advocates for the victims of police misconduct within the community.

We will be advocates for people who feel the police have mistreated them. We will make all our documents available to such people, and their lawyers on request. We will archive all documentation so that if a person first chooses not to pursue a claim against the police, and later decides to, the documentation will be available. We will erase any unusable video.

We will attempt to de-escalate situations whenever possible and we will encourage people to solve problems nonviolently without the involvement of police. We want to help expand community support for victims of police crime, to educate community members about their rights, encourage others to exercise their right to observe the police, and mobilize the community to protest injustices through marches, rallies and other demonstrations.

CODE OF CONDUCT

This section of the COPWATCH handbook may seem redundant in some ways, however we need to decrease the likelihood that police will harass us unnecessarily. To do so some things bear repeating.

1. We are on the streets as non-violent, non-confrontational observers.
2. Members are required to wear their identifying clothing while on shift.
3. Members of COPWATCH will be required to attend a training session before hitting the streets.
4. Weapons are not tolerated while on COPWATCH; we will be unarmed.
5. While on duty or prior to going on duty, the use or possession of drugs or alcohol is prohibited.
   No one is to be under the influence while on shift.

We don't want to give cops any reason to stop us. Persons not following these guidelines will not be permitted to go on shift as COPWATCHers.

NONVIOLENCE GUIDELINES

- Treat everyone you come in contact with in a friendly and polite manner.
- Please refrain from carrying and/or using anything considered a weapon and, of course, no drugs or alcohol during shift.
- Speak in a clear and audible voice. It is not necessary to raise you voice, yell or scream in any contact situation.
- Avoid the use of any terms that may be taken as derogatory of insulting.
- Maintain a legal and safe distance from any police incident or contact. This does not mean you cannot engage the police in conversation and walk or stand next to them when they are on a routine patrol.
- Avoid quick or sudden changes in your position when you are observing a police/ citizen contact. Never make sudden moves toward the police or break into a run for any reason
- Do not use flash cameras or video lighting when officers are engaging in a routine stop of someone. If a stop escalates into unnecessary use of force of violence, you have the right to record the scene using flash bulbs or video light.
- If you are a witness to someone being beaten or treated roughly, calmly ask the officer(s) involved to stop or ask, "Why are you doing this?" Warn them that you will place yourself between them and the victim if this is a form of nonviolence that you want to employ.
- Never speak for anyone else when you are talking to authorities. Make it clear that you are the one involved in any encounter with the police and that you are not working for the homeless, street people, people of color, gays/lesbians. Never use any other organizations name except COPWATCH.
- If you are tired and irritable before or during your shift, try to find someone to replace you. COPWATCH is not the place to be if you are not in the mood to deal with intense or frustrating situations.
- Try to be helpful to the citizen being stopped/arrested without making his/her situation worse. Our goal is to lessen the incidents of harassment and violence, not to escalate them.

Tactics

1. INTIMIDATION THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

Our main tactic in COPWATCH will be to discourage police brutality and harassment by making cops aware that they are being watched, and that they will be held accountable for their actions.

- Record incidents of harassment and abuse
- Follow through on complaints
- Educate those who don't believe that police harassment exists
- Educate the community about their rights

2. DIFFUSE SITUATIONS

The last things we want is for a cop to arrest someone because the cop is angry with us. We want cops to treat people with respect and to observe their rights. Cops often forget that arrestees are people and that they have rights. We want cops to treat ALL people courteously. In order to discourage cops from hassling our brothers and sisters, we may have to be diplomatic. We must be firm in demanding that rights be respected; yet we must avoid endangering someone who is already in some trouble. We must try to learn exactly what our rights are. Sometimes asking cops to cite sections of the Penal Code, which pertain to the situation, will remind them that they are acting outside of the law. Remember that the goal is to prevent unnecessary arrests.

It is very important to remain as calm as possible while observing the police, generally your presence will increase the level of anger and tension. This can be enough to make cops arrest someone. We must be careful not to escalate the situation. The danger is that while on the street the cops can be

observed, but behind closed doors we have no way of monitoring the cops. Take strength in the fact that you are within you rights to observe the police. Remember that your body language can make cops nervous. Try to keep hands visible at all times. Don't make sudden moves.

3. EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY

On the streets we are serving the people. We are concerned with THE PEOPLE. Our effectiveness as COPWATCHers will be greatly enhanced if the community trusts us.

When the streets are quiet and there is no police activity, a COPWATCHer can spend time distributing the "Bust Cards" pamphlets or just getting to know people. Explain to the people that you are with COPWATCH and tell them about the program. Get into conversations. If people know that you are trying to help and that you care, that in itself will be empowering.

Depending on how familiar and/comfortable you are you can assist people with problems that arise. We want our community to solve problems without police intervention when possible. If we can bring calm to a situation instead of the police, we are doing very well. This portion of "Tactics" is intentionally vague because it requires your judgment. **Do not stick you nose where it does not belong. Do not endanger yourself.** Be wise.

(Note: "Bust Cards" are wallet-sized summaries of one's rights should they be arrested by the police. It is important to know this information)

PROCEDURES

Prior to Your Shift

1. Organize to meet your partner at a mutually agreeable location and time.
2. Make sure you are not carrying anything illegal
3. Wear your Identifying shirts/badges.
4. Be sure that you or your partner brings the things you will need for your shift. What follows is a list of things you may want to bring. Items that are necessary are designated by bold print.

- **Video Camera**
- **Scanner**
- **Shirts/Badges**
- **COPWATCH Handbook**
- "Business" Cards
- Literature
- Still Camera(s)
- Cassette Recorder
- **Incident Report Forms**

Meeting Up With Your Crew.

Shifts last for 3-4 hours depending on individual stamina. Please be on time, it is courteous to your crew. **IF YOU CANNOT MAKE A SHIFT PLEASE FIND A REPLACEMENT FOR YOURSELF.**

Before doing anything else, log on film who is responsible for each position.

- Spokesperson (one person to speak for the group)
- Video Camera person
- Still Camera/Cassette Recorder
- Note taker
- Other

At a Scene

- Turn on record immediately to get all events
- Position yourselves at a safe distance, no closer than 15 feet.

What to Document

The following should be recorded on film and paper in the incident report along with any other media available.

Cops stop someone.

4. Record officer name, badge number, and car license number if it is near. (Don't leave the person being hassled.)
5. Record the time, place and date of incident.
6. Determine if person is being arrested and on what charge.

1. Get names of witnesses to the arrest/ harassment and how to contact them.
2. Try to get name of arrestee, but **don't ask their name unless they have already given it to the police.**
3. After the incident, take time to fill out incident report completely.

Cop Violence

1. Same as above.
2. Attempt to gather witnesses to the incident by explaining to bystanders what is happening.
3. Encourage cops to be calm and nonviolent.

Note: Attempt to maintain a "reasonable distance" so that you don't get arrested for interfering in the arrest. **Explain to cops that you don't want to interfere but that you know you have a right to observe their actions.**

Remember: Distribute our "Business Cards" to victims in case someone needs to contact us.

After Your Shift

- Archive Tapes, photos, etc.
- File Incident Reports in the File Cabinet.

Tech Support

(This section is an example, and should be amended for your group's needs)

Our Camera

Battery: Make sure the battery is charged. It goes on the back of the camera. Slide the top of the battery in and then snap the bottom in place. The battery release is just below the battery. WHEN YOU'RE DONE BE SURE TO PUT BATTERY BACK ON THE CHARGER!

Tapes: This camera uses mini VHS tapes, NOT 8mm. The tape eject is just to the left of the battery. Put the tape in on the left hand side and push the button labeled "Push" while manually closing the tape door.

Operation: Your right hand goes in the strap on the right side of the camera. The switch under you right thumb is the power button and the pause/record button. Move the switch counter clockwise to the "Camera" position to turn the camera on. The Lens Cover is near your right pinky finger toward the top of the camera, slide this up to uncover the lens. (Please put it down when not in use.) The zoom control is operated by you right index and middle fingers on the top of the camera. On the left of the camera is a dial that

controls the amount of light the camera lets in. It is best to leave this set at "Auto." The other buttons on the camera are bells and whistles that are not important to COPWATCHing.

NOTES: Take time to familiarize yourself with the Camera before you go out.

Never rewind a tape once you have shot street footage. Keep that tape until it has been archived.

Our Scanner

This is a pretty complicated piece of equipment, but as far as we have found that the university and city police use the same channel so that makes it much easier. The channel (155.3100 Mhz) has been programmed into the manual function on the scanner. Here is how to get to it.

1. Turn the scanner on by twisting the volume knob on the top of the scanner.
2. Press the Manual button in the center of the top row on the keypad.
3. To lock out the keypad to avoid accidentally switching channels press the Function key, labeled "func" at the top left row of the keypad. Then push the Lock out key in the bottom left of the keypad.is button the middle of the top row.

4. If the channel does get switched somehow, the easiest way to get back to the right channel is to switch the scanner off and then repeat steps 1 thru 3.
5. Remember to turn of the scanner and charge it at the end of the night. The Scanner is charged by inserting the adapter plug (the one that is separated from the others, it's the only one that fits.) into the jack on the left side of the box.

Common Radio "10" Codes

Ten-1 msg not understood
Ten-2 signal is good
Ten-3 stop transmitting
Ten-4 msg received
Ten-5 relay info to ____
Ten-6 station is busy
Ten-7 out of service
Ten-8 in service
Ten-9 repeat last msg
Ten-10 negative (no)
Ten-11 ____ in service
Ten-12 stand by
Ten-13 report ____conditions
Ten-14 information
Ten-15 msg delivered
Ten-16 reply to msg
Ten-17 enroute
Ten-18 urgent
Ten-19 contact _____
Ten-20 unit location
Ten-21 call ____ by phone
Ten-22 cancel last msg
Ten-23 arrived at scene
Ten-24 assignment completed
Ten-25 meet _____
Ten-26 est. time of arrival ___
Ten-27 req for info on license
Ten-28 req vehicle reg. info
Ten-29 check records
Ten-30 use caution
Ten-31 pick up
Ten-32 units requested
Ten-33 emergency! help needed
Ten-34 correct time

IN CASE OF ARREST

If You are Arrested

- The police must tell you why you are being arrested. Cops must wear a clearly visible badge number or nameplate.
- You have the right to remain silent. Exercise that right, don't talk to them unless you have a lawyer present. If you are in custody, the police may not question you about any offense they think you have committed unless they "read you your rights," including the right to remain silent and to have an attorney present before you are questioned.
- The court must provide you a lawyer if you can't afford one. You have the right to speak to a lawyer before arraignment.
- If you are arrested you may be searched without your permission.
- As soon as possible, and in any case no longer than three hours after being booked, you have the right to 3 phone calls: to a friend or relative, to a lawyer, and to a bail bondsman.

Warning: Just because the police have an obligation to protect and observe your rights doesn't mean they will. The same thing goes for judges. How the law is to be interpreted can be a matter of opinion. So insist on your rights, but don't be surprised if you don't get them.

The Law

The Law is a strange and complicated thing. There are a few major points about the law that COPWATCHers must be aware of.

1. The purpose of written laws is to determine what actions should be taken after a crime has been committed. What a police officer does is not the same as what the courts will later determine that the officer should have done.
2. There is a great degree of ambiguity in many laws, which means that cops are constantly making interpretations of the law in their actions.
3. There are many sources of law. The ones that are most relevant to COPWATCH are the codes concerning vagrancy, criminal mischief, and intoxication.

4.Different standards of proof are required for different actions. For someone to be simply questioned or frisked for weapons requires that the police officer only has to have a "reasonable suspicion" that someone is guilty of a crime. To arrest someone, however, the cop must have "probable cause" to believe someone is guilty of a crime. Only for conviction in court is the standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt" used. This section outlines which laws apply to certain situations.

Here is a brief list of some common things citizens might be "busted" for.

Disorderly Conduct; Intoxication.

No person shall recklessly cause inconvenience, annoyance or alarm to another by doing any of the following:

1. Engaging in fighting, in threatening harm to persons or property, or in violent or turbulent behavior;
2. Making unreasonable noise or offensively coarse utterance, gesture or display, or communicating unwarranted and grossly abusive language to any person, which by its very utterance or usage inflicts injury or tends to incite an immediate breach of the peace;
3. Insulting, taunting or challenging another, under circumstances in which such conduct is likely to provoke a violent response;
4. Hindering or preventing the movement of persons on a public street, road, highway or right of way, or to , from , within or upon public or private property so as to interfere with the rights of others, and by any act which serves no lawful and reasonable purpose of the offender;
5. Creating a condition which is physically offensive to persons or which presents a risk

of physical harm to persons or property, by any act which serves no lawful and reasonable purpose of the offender.

B. No person, while voluntarily intoxicated shall do ether of the following:

1. In a public place or in the presence of two or more persons, engage in conduct likely to be offensive or to cause inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm to person of ordinary sensibilities, which conduct the offender, if he were not intoxicated, should know is likely to have such effect on others;
2. Engage in conduct or create a condition which presents a risk of physical harm to himself or another, or to the property of another.

Vagrants

Any person able to work and support himself or herself, in any honest and respectable calling, trade or business, who lives idly and without any visible means to support himself or herself; and

1. Who shall be found loitering or strolling about in any street, alley, park or any public or private place within the Municipality; or

2. Who shall go about begging in the Municipality, not having any regular lawful business; or
3. Who shall occupy for the purpose of lodging any barn, shed, shop, or place other than such as is provided for that purpose, without permission of the owner or person entitled to possession thereof; or
4. Who shall be the keeper, proprietor or exhibitor or any device for swindling, or shall be an assistant or attendant to any such device; or
5. Who, for the purpose of gaming or gambling, travels about from place to place or frequents taverns or public places in the Municipality for that purpose; or
6. Upon whom shall be found any instrument or thing used for the commission of burglary, or for picking locks or pockets, and who shall fail to give good account of his possession of the same; or
7. Who shall be engaged in any fraudulent scheme, device or trick upon the streets or public or private places in the Municipality

Criminal Mischief

No person shall;

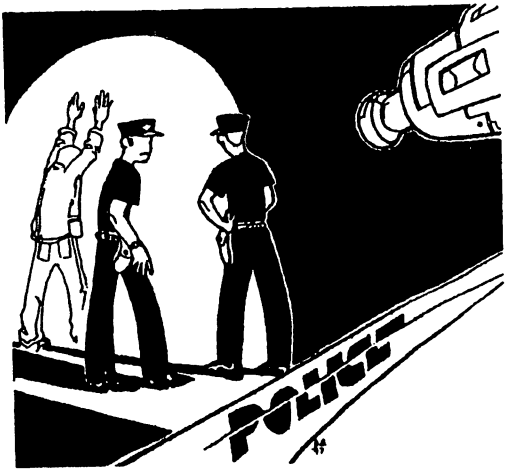
1. Without privilege to do so, knowingly move, deface, damage, destroy, or otherwise improperly tamper with the property of another;
2. With purpose to interfere with the use or enjoyment of property of another employ a tear gas device, stink bomb, smoke generator or other device releasing a substance which is harmful or offensive to persons exposed, or which tends to cause public alarm;
3. Without privilege to do so, knowingly move, deface, damage, destroy or otherwise improperly tamper with a bench mark, triangulation station, boundary marker or other survey station, monument or marker;
4. Without privilege to do so, knowingly move, deface, damage, destroy or otherwise improperly tamper with any safety device, the property of another, or the property of the offender when required or placed for the safety of others, so as to destroy or diminish its effectiveness or availability for its intended purpose.

Copwatch

Copwatch is a non-violent citizen advocacy organization. We are citizens helping citizens; whether they are community members, students, or visitors. Our goal is simply to help combat police brutality, abuse of power, and corruption. Our methods are just as simple. We observe the police in the streets and document their actions on film, on paper, and through eyewitness. We want to make police accountable for what they do.

We take it upon ourselves to police the police. We will help people who may be detained by police become more aware of their rights. We will be a resource for those who feel the police have mistreated them.

To help:
Keep your eyes and ears open. Look out for your fellow citizens and be a witness. Sometimes just knowing people are watching will deter cops from violence



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