



## Atlanta Police Department Body-Worn Cameras

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5th Annual IIA Atlanta  
Government and Not-for-Profit  
(Virtual) Conference

1/21/2022

# Why We Did the Audit

- The Atlanta Police Department began deploying body-worn cameras in 2016, beginning with Zone 4 in Southwest Atlanta and rolling them out to the other patrol zones throughout 2017.
- The Chief of Police requested we conduct a performance audit to assess compliance with the department's body-worn camera policy and recommend metrics for monitoring program compliance.

A hand holding a pen and pointing at a bar chart with colorful bars. The background is a blurred office setting.

# Audit Objectives

- Do body-worn camera users comply with the Atlanta Police Department's standard operating procedures?
- What metrics should the Atlanta Police Department consider when assessing officers' compliance with policy and best practices?

# Audit Methodology

- Interviews with APD, ACRB, and APF
- City Code and APD policies
- Best practices
- Analyzed system data for capturing videos compared to CAD (computer-aided dispatch) activity
- Analyzed video upload and categorization by role, particularly for use of force incidents
- Analyzed Evidence.com system controls to assess video retention and deletion
- Observed roll call and ride-alongs with officers

# Body-Worn Camera Captures Officer's Field of Vision



Body worn camera attaches to uniform with magnetic clip



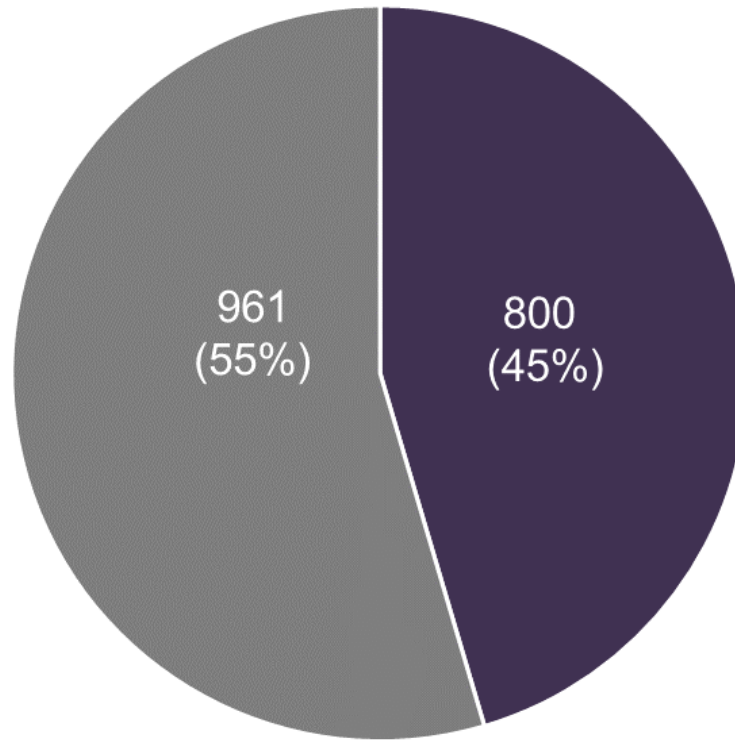
## Polling Question #1:

As of early 2021, how many states mandated the statewide use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement officers?

- a. 10
- b. 7
- c. 25

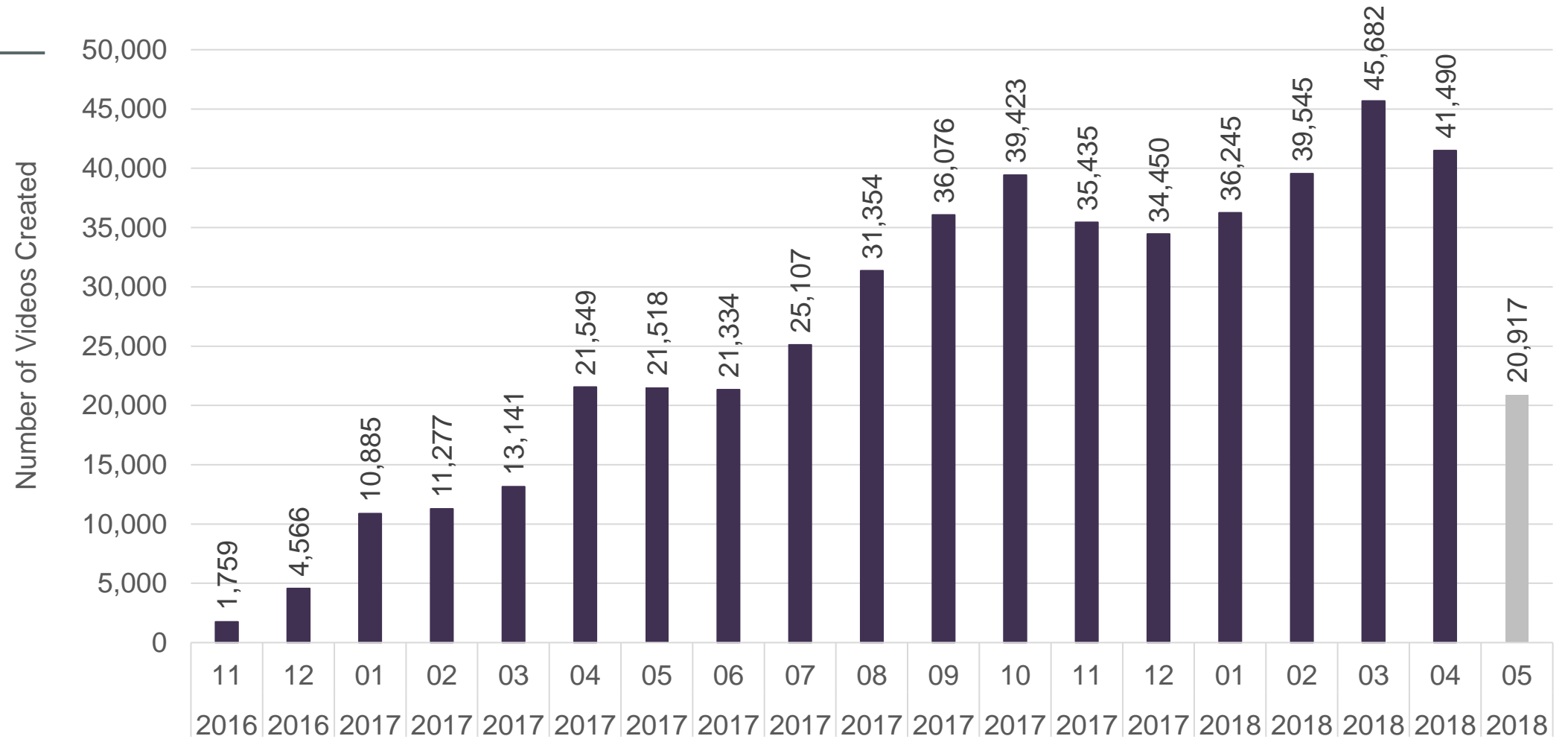
# Almost Half of Sworn Officers Were Assigned Cameras

(as of May 2018)



■ Body-Worn Camera User ■ Non Body-Worn Camera User

# Officers Created Nearly 500,000 Recordings Since 2016





## Polling Question #2:

What percent of APD calls had corresponding body camera videos?

- a. 45%
- b. 90%
- c. 33%

# What We Found

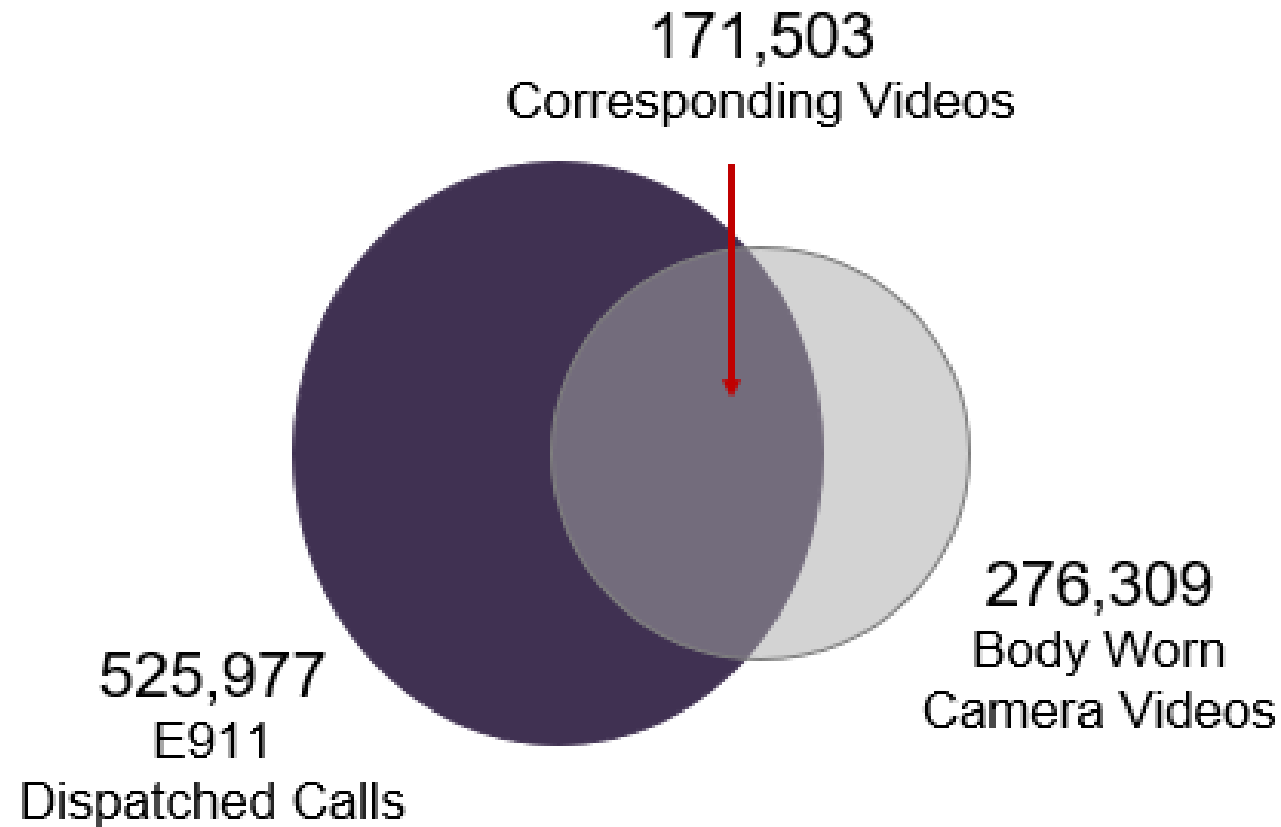
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- Officers were not using body-worn cameras as intended
  - Officers captured video for 33% of officer-dispatched calls from November 2017 through May 2018; expectation is 80%
  - Officers delayed activation and prematurely deactivated cameras for many incidents

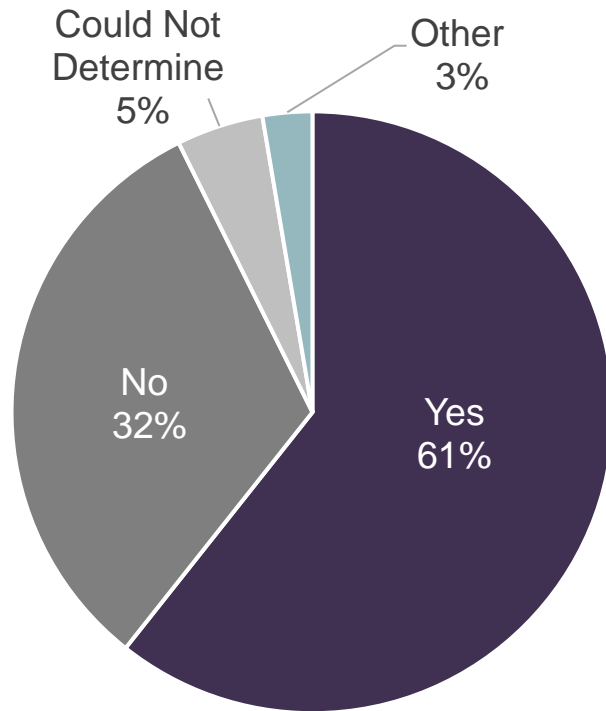
# What We Found

- Officers uploaded most videos according to procedures
- Officers categorized almost all videos, but could improve the accuracy of assigned categories
- Supervisors and compliance staff are not reviewing videos for compliance with body-camera policies
- System controls generally complied with retention policy, but 64 videos were deleted by supervisors

# Most E911 Dispatched Calls Had No Body-Worn Camera Footage

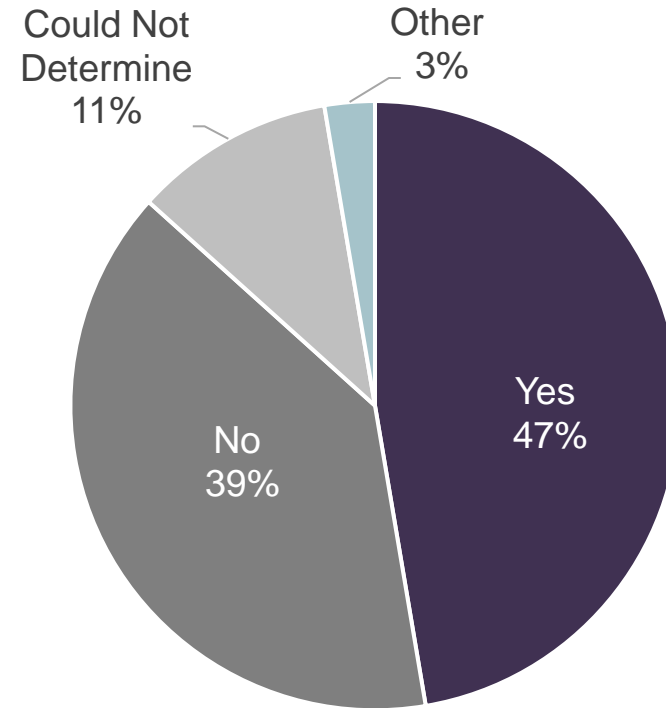


# Most Officers Failed to Activate and Deactivate Cameras According to Policy



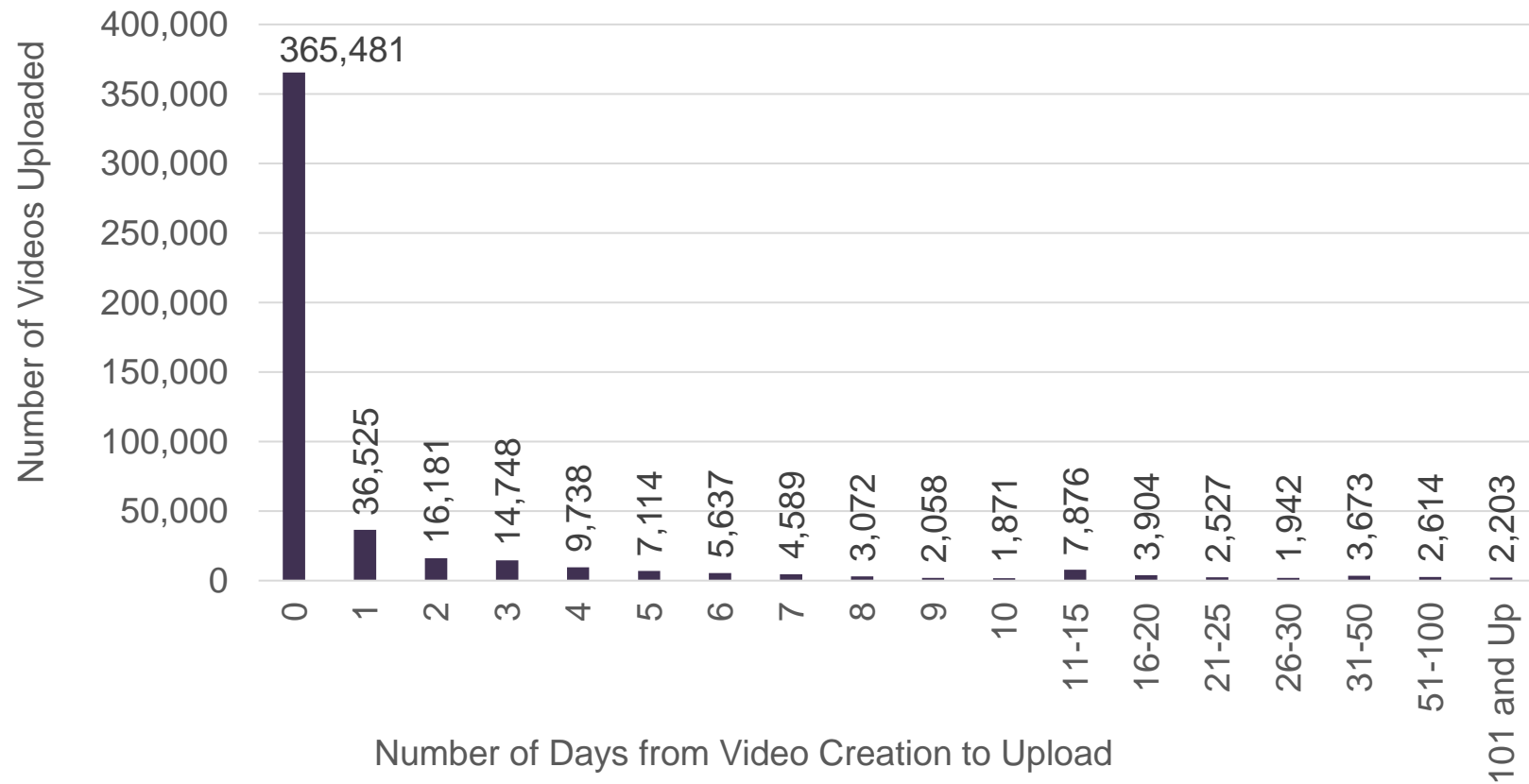
Camera **Activation** Consistent with Procedures

150 Total Videos Sampled



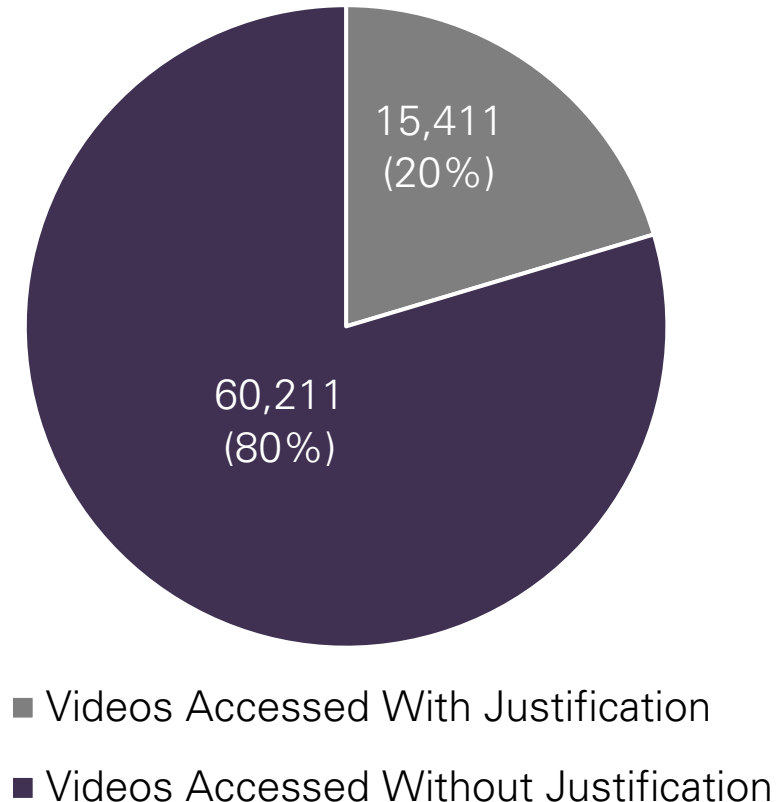
Camera **Deactivation** Consistent with Procedures

# Officers Uploaded and Categorized Almost All Videos Captured



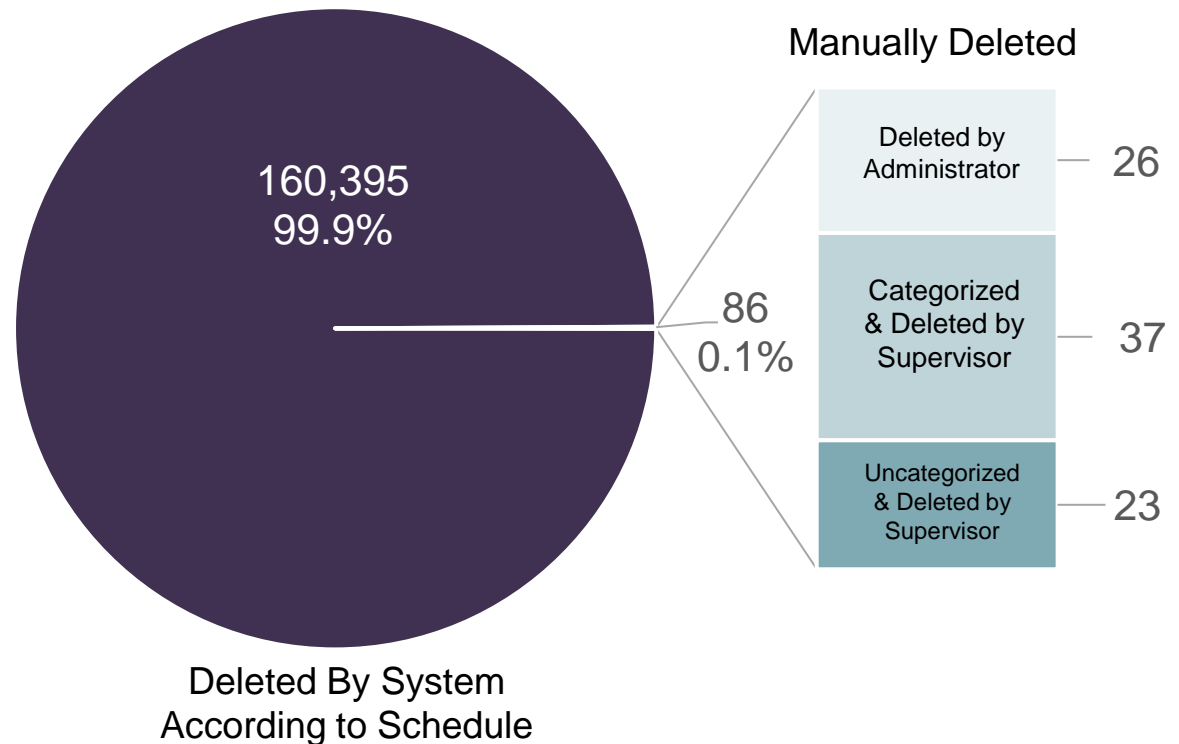
## Users Failed to Document Video Access

- Only 20% of the 75,622 videos streamed by officers and other users between November 2016 and May 2018 included justification notes.
- Failure to comply may violate citizens' privacy and disrupt the chain of custody and may affect the evidentiary value of the video evidence in court proceedings.



# Some Manual Deletions Bypassed System Controls

- Only 20% of the 75,622 videos streamed by officers and other users between November 2016 and May 2018 included justification notes.
- Failure to comply may violate citizens' privacy and disrupt the chain of custody and may affect the evidentiary value of the video evidence in court proceedings.





## It is Unclear How Supervisors Assess Compliance with Camera Policies

- Supervisors streamed 8,372 (2%) of the 491,753 videos created from November 2016 through May 2018.
- Supervisors are responsible for ensuring officers' compliance with body-worn camera policies, but departmental policies do not explain how this is to be accomplished.

## Compliance Administrators Could Improve Training and Monitoring Efforts

- Between November 2016 and May 2018, the compliance team streamed 1,325 videos - less than 1% of the total videos captured during that period.
- The compliance team verified only 1,543 of the 155,094 videos deleted between May 2017 and May 2018 to verify that videos were categorized correctly.
- Officers had not received refresher training since the body-worn camera program was first implemented in late 2016.

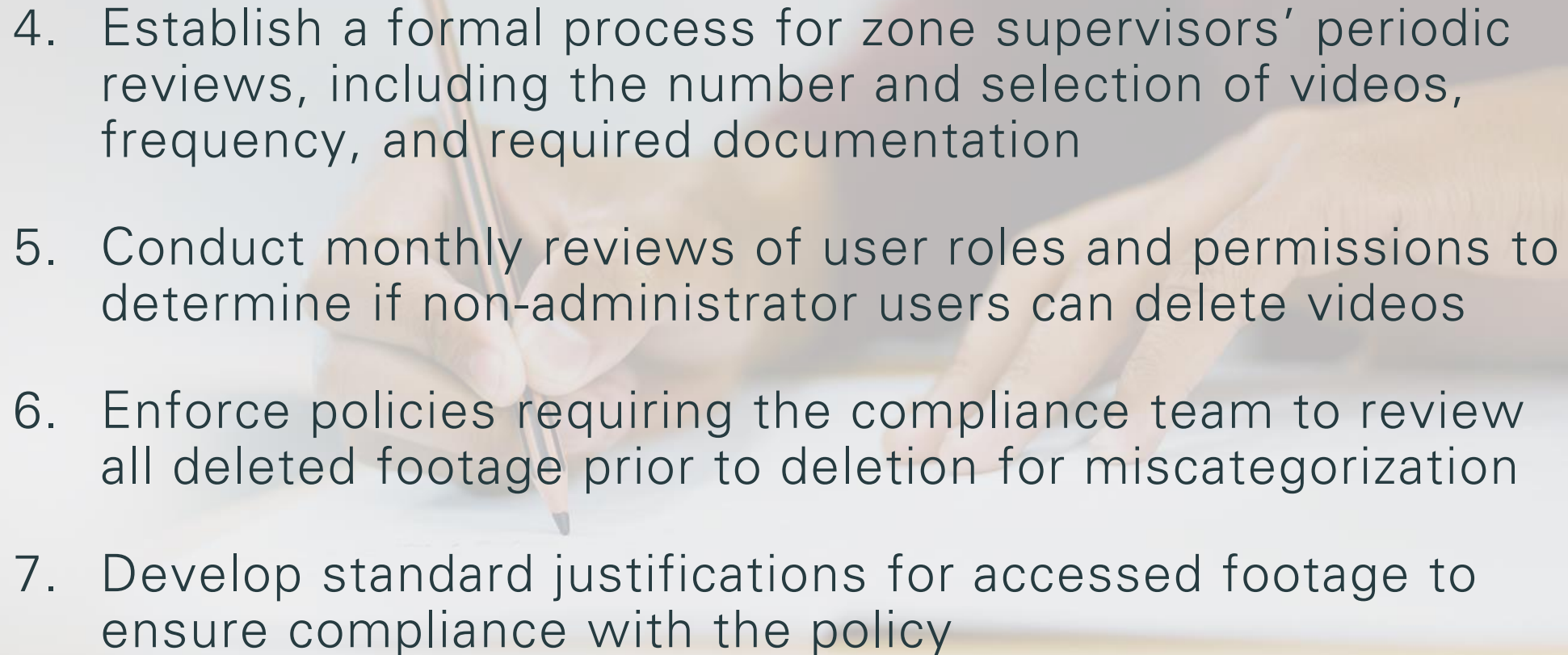
## Polling Question #3:

Do you think wearing and activating body-worn cameras will change police behavior?

- a. Yes
- b. No

# Recommendations

1. Clarify the policy to state whether all officers responding to an incident must record body camera video
2. Update the policy to remove the requirement that supervisors upload videos of use-of-force incidents and to require supervisors to review the audit trail to ensure the involved officer has not accessed the video prior to writing the report
3. Clarify criteria for labeling and categorizing videos in standard operating procedures

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- A background image showing a person's hands writing on a document with a pencil. The image is faded and serves as a backdrop for the text.
4. Establish a formal process for zone supervisors' periodic reviews, including the number and selection of videos, frequency, and required documentation
  5. Conduct monthly reviews of user roles and permissions to determine if non-administrator users can delete videos
  6. Enforce policies requiring the compliance team to review all deleted footage prior to deletion for miscategorization
  7. Develop standard justifications for accessed footage to ensure compliance with the policy

## 8. Monitor and track the following performance metrics:

The number and percentage of:

- videos captured compared to the number of dispatched calls, using the 80% threshold as a comparative benchmark
- videos uploaded to the system within one day
- uncategorized videos
- videos streamed by supervisors
- videos deleted before the retention schedule
- videos audited by the compliance team
- audited videos that complied with activation procedures
- audited videos that complied with deactivation procedures
- audited videos categorized accurately



# Implementation

- The Atlanta Police Department's Chief of Police, Erika Shields, implemented almost all our recommendations soon after the audit was completed.
- The Department's procedures were revised, providing more clarity about when officers were required to activate body-worn cameras and helping to ensure that procedures are followed.

## Audit Impact

- An officer shot and killed unarmed alleged armed robber Jimmy Atkinson in January 2019, but the officer did not activate his body-worn camera footage during the encounter.
- Chief Shields told City Councilmembers the cameras have been turned off too often and implemented disciplinary procedures for officers who fail to comply.

## This is how Atlanta Police will get officers to turn on body cameras

Atlanta's police chief said body cameras are turned off too often.



Author: Doug Richards  
Published: 6:08 PM EDT May 1, 2019  
Updated: 9:58 AM EDT May 2, 2019



[www.11alive.com/article/news/apd-chief-suspend-then-fire-cops-who-dont-use-bodycams/85-8b2d511a-c616-4789-8300-3b5836209a69](http://www.11alive.com/article/news/apd-chief-suspend-then-fire-cops-who-dont-use-bodycams/85-8b2d511a-c616-4789-8300-3b5836209a69)



# Audit Impact

- An Atlanta officer fatally shot Rayshard Brooks in June 2020 in the parking lot of a Wendy's restaurant.
- Police recorded 41 minutes of body camera video during the incident.



<https://abcnews.go.com/US/atlanta-police-chief-erika-shields-resigns-wake-fatal/story?id=71239552>

# Questions?

## Contact Information:

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## Link to the audit report:

[http://www.atlaudit.org/uploads/3/9/5/8/39584481/apd\\_bwc\\_december\\_2018.pdf](http://www.atlaudit.org/uploads/3/9/5/8/39584481/apd_bwc_december_2018.pdf)