

FILMING THE POLICE:

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Observe & film police in public or on your private property
- Ask police for name & badge numbers
- Question police actions

DO NOT:

- Physically interfere with police
- Enter a designated crime scene
- Touch a police officer at any time

Film as close to the scene as you are comfortable doing. Police may ask you to step back or stand elsewhere. You may take a step back if you'd like, but there is no legally required distance. Just make sure you're not blocking the road or sidewalk.

If threatened with arrest, clearly state, "I am not physically interfering." Speech is not interfering.

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WHY FILM THE POLICE?

De-escalation: cops feel less empowered & are less likely to be violent when cameras are on them

Documentation: holding cops accountable for their actions

Solidarity & People Power: Body cam footage is not always accessible; it is the property of the police. We need our own footage to tell our own stories.

(Note: BTV CopWatch will **never post footage** to social media without consent. We never livestream.)

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: VERMONT

If police have reasonable suspicion that you have committed a crime, they can detain you. Legally you must identify yourself but you do not need to furnish your ID or answer more questions. Lying to the police is against the law but police can legally lie to you!

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IF POLICE STOP YOU

Remain calm & film the encounter

Do not answer questions. Anything you say can be used against you.

Ask, "**Am I being detained or am I free to go?**"

If you are not being detained, **leave** the scene!

If you are being detained, ask, "**Why am I being detained?**"

If you are arrested, ask, "**On what charge?**"

Once the charge is confirmed, **ask for a lawyer** and **do not say anything** until you speak to your lawyer.

Record all details of the incident as soon as possible (date, time, location)

Get all officer names and badge numbers

Get any witness contact info

Document any injuries by taking photos and seeking medical attention

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NEVER CONSENT TO A SEARCH

Police may ask, "You don't mind if I look in your [car, purse, trunk, backpack, etc.], do you?"

Say, **"I do not consent to any searches."**

Police need a search warrant to enter your home or to search your car or your person.

If they have a warrant, verify the address and/or content to be searched.

For a vehicle stop, you must provide your license and registration. Nothing more is required.

REMEMBER THESE KEY PHRASES

"Am I being detained or am I free to go?"

"I do not consent to any searches."

"I am asserting my right to remain silent."

"I would like to speak with an attorney."

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ABOUT US

BTV CopWatch is a group of community members dedicated to holding police accountable, fostering community self-defense, and ultimately ending the institutional violence taking place on our streets in Burlington, Vermont.

While copwatch is firstly about filming the cops for de-escalation & documentation, we also build solidarity through mutual aid, political education, and disruption of oppressive systems of power.

Please be in touch if you'd like to join our community, request training, or inform us of incidents of police violence & potentially seek recourse.

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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The logo for BTV CopWatch, featuring the text "BTV" in a large, bold, sans-serif font above "COPWATCH" in a similar font, with a small circle over the "O" in "COPWATCH". The text is white on a black background.

Protect and Serve Each Other

This guide will help you safely interact with police and film police encounters in order to hold police accountable, prevent police violence, and protect your rights. Asserting your rights ensures the rights of everyone.

**Strong communities
make police obsolete!**

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