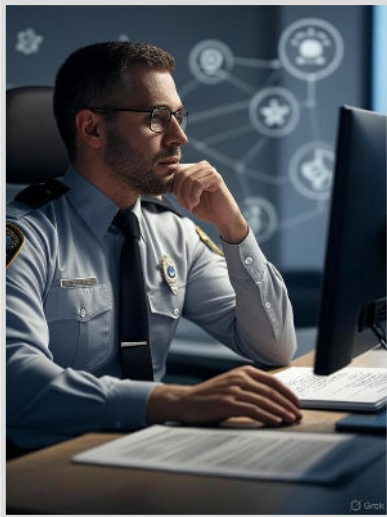




Are AI Redaction and Reporting Tools Really Time Savers?

Shifting The Burden

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Artificial intelligence tools have been sold primarily upon the premise that they significantly streamline operations in law enforcement. One of the most popular today is AI software that generates police reports directly from body-worn camera (BWC) video. These systems transcribe an officer's investigation, reorganize the information into a report, and provide the officer with a draft that can be quickly finalized. They are marketed, demonstrated, and pitched as an amazing time saver for officers. Indeed, the tools can be impressive.

For officers, the benefits are clear. Report writing is one of the most time-consuming administrative burdens of the job, sometimes consuming hours of a shift. With AI-assisted drafting, that time can be reduced dramatically, giving officers more time in the field and less time at a keyboard.

But while officers save time, public records staff face a very different reality.

The Hidden Cost in Records Units

When those same body-worn camera videos and AI-generated reports are requested by the public, Records personnel must prepare them for release. And here is where the problem emerges:

- **Redaction Tools Are Imperfect**

AI redaction systems are designed to automatically blur faces, mute sensitive

audio, or flag information that cannot be released. But in practice, these tools often miss the mark. If two or more people are speaking at once, the system cannot always distinguish who is saying what, leading to incomplete or inaccurate transcriptions. Sensitive information can slip through.

- **On the video side, redaction software frequently fails** to catch faces requiring redaction when they are partially blocked or obscured. A person might lean behind a door frame or move quickly past an object — and the system doesn't register the need to blur.
- **Human Oversight Is Still Required**
Because the stakes are high — privacy rights, legal compliance, and liability — Records personnel cannot rely solely on the tool's output. Staff must review **the entire video and transcript** to check for missed redactions.
- **The QA Burden**
Once redactions are made, staff then have to replay the redacted version to confirm nothing sensitive was missed. This quality assurance step, while critical, effectively **doubles** the review time.

This is why the cost of these records can be so high, and why the Records Unit, which is typically responsible for handling records requests, has been strained.

The Time-Savings Trade-Off

What results is a paradox:

- **Officers gain time** by offloading report writing to AI.
- **Records units lose time** by having to carefully review and correct both the video and AI-generated reports for public release.

The net effect? Departments may find themselves simply **shifting the administrative burden** from sworn personnel to civilian Records staff without achieving the overall efficiency gains promised by the technology and the vendor.

The Path Forward For Vendors, and Buyers

AI tools in policing are not going away. They offer genuine benefits, especially in helping officers document their work more quickly and consistently. But



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agencies must acknowledge the **downstream impact on Records operations** when adopting these systems.

- Investments in AI for officers should be paired with equal investments in tools and staffing for Records.
- Vendors should be transparent about this reality and support the need for more resources for administrative/records personnel in this area.
- Law enforcement leaders should avoid claiming AI report-writing and redaction tools result in agency-wide time savings.

Until redaction technology catches up, **Records personnel will remain the safety net** — carefully checking every second of video and every line of transcript to ensure sensitive information stays protected.

Bottom line: Departments should enter this new era with eyes wide open, understanding that efficiency gains in one area can create new pressures in another. AI may save officers hours on report writing, but it comes at the cost of increased review and redaction time for Records staff.

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