

Talbot County Free Library Security Camera Policy

The Talbot County Free Library (TCFL) offers a welcoming, open atmosphere and provides a quiet, comfortable, and safe environment where people can enjoy the use of library facilities and collections.

Security cameras are used where needed to discourage violations of the Library's Code of Conduct, criminal activity, destruction or theft of library property, to help library staff prevent violations, and, when necessary, to provide law enforcement assistance in prosecuting criminal activity. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for placing and using security cameras, and accessing and retrieving recorded images.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Camera placement shall be determined by the library director or his/her designee. Cameras shall not be placed in areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as in restrooms.

Confidentiality/privacy issues prohibit the general public from viewing security camera footage that contains patron information. If the library receives a request from the general public to inspect security camera footage that contains patron information, the general public will be advised to file a police complaint. To the extent that any recorded images include identifiable persons requesting information or checking out an item, such record shall be treated as confidential. Only designated library staff may view real time images or screen recorded images for potential breach of confidentiality. Any inadvertent views of protected information shall be held in confidence by library staff. All requests for public disclosure of recorded images shall be presented to the library director or designee.

The primary purpose of the installation of security cameras is to protect our patrons, staff and property. However, staff should have no expectation of privacy regarding security camera footage and footage may be viewed anytime there is a suspicion or report of illegal or inappropriate behavior on the part of a staff member.

Procedures

- Cameras are installed at library locations on an as needed basis.
- Signs will be posted informing the public that security cameras are in use.
- Security cameras may be placed in both indoor and outdoor areas where security staff and designated Library staff can monitor activity.
- Access to archived footage in pursuit of documented incidents of criminal activity or violation of the Library's Rules of Conduct is restricted to designated staff: Branch Managers, Persons-in-Charge (PIC), Security Staff, Library Administration, and Information Technology Staff.
- Access to archived footage may be granted to law enforcement officials to assist with an active investigation. A TCFL staff person will be present at all times.
- Access to live feeds may be provided to law enforcement officials during an emergency situation within the library or in the library's service area.

- Security camera images and archives will automatically record over themselves on an ongoing basis. Image records will not be maintained, provided no criminal activity or policy violation has occurred.
- In situations involving banned patrons, stored still images may be shared with staff at all locations. Shared images may remain posted in restricted staff areas for the duration of the banning period. After the banning period ends, these images may be archived with the banning documentation at the Easton Library.
- Recordings may be subject to disclosure under the Maryland PIA.
- In the event of a search warrant, which is executable immediately, Library Administration will comply with the search warrant and consult with legal counsel.
- Upon receipt of a subpoena or other court order, Library Administration shall consult with legal counsel to determine if the document is in proper form and that good cause for its issuance in a court of proper jurisdiction is demonstrated. If not, Library Administration shall insist any defect be remedied before releasing records which contain patron information.
- Confidentiality/privacy issues prohibit the general public from viewing security camera footage that contains patron information. If the library receives a request from the general public to inspect security camera footage which contains patron information, the general public will be advised to file a police complaint.
- All requests for public disclosure of recorded images shall be presented to the Library Director or designee to act in his/her stead.
- Policy questions will be directed to the Library Director, or designee.

Guidelines

- Because security cameras are not constantly monitored, staff and the public should take appropriate precautions for their safety and for the security of personal property. The Talbot County Free Library is not responsible for loss of property or personal injury.
- Cameras will be installed in public spaces where individuals do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Examples include common areas of the library such as entrances, book stacks, public seating areas, hallways, book drop areas, delivery areas and parking lots.
- Cameras will not be installed in areas of the Library where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as in restrooms.
- Cameras are not positioned to identify a person's reading, viewing or listening activities.
- Images will typically be stored for an average period of 45 days.
- Cameras may be installed in areas that could assist law enforcement officials in documenting traffic accidents or other incidents unrelated to the Library that take place on the public streets and surrounding properties within camera view. Examples include cameras on the exterior of a library building that not only document activity on Library property but also the sidewalk, public streets, and surrounding properties.
- The primary purpose of the installation of security cameras is to protect our patrons, staff and property. However, staff should have no expectation of privacy regarding security camera footage and footage may be viewed anytime there is a suspicion or report of illegal or inappropriate behavior on the part of the staff member.
- Staff and patron safety is the first priority in any threatening situation. The protection of library property is of secondary importance.