



**DIGITAL CAMERAS:
IMPACT AND USE POLICY**

UPDATED: FEBRUARY 4, 2026

SUMMARY OF CHANGES BETWEEN DRAFT & FINAL POLICY

Update	Description of Update
Removed statement that digital cameras do not use artificial intelligence and machine learning.	Public comments highlighted a lack of industry-standard definitions for artificial intelligence and machine learning.
Expanded upon digital cameras capabilities.	Added language clarifying digital cameras capabilities. Added language describing how digital cameras compliment other NYPD technologies.
Expanded upon digital cameras rules of use.	Added language clarifying digital cameras rules of use.
Expanded upon digital cameras safeguards and security measures.	Added language regarding information security. Added language to reflect the removal of access to digital cameras when job duties no longer require access.
Expanded upon digital cameras data retention.	Added language to reflect NYPD obligations under federal, state, and local record retention laws.
Expanded upon digital cameras external entities section.	Added language to reflect NYPD obligations under the local privacy laws.
Grammar changes.	Minor syntax edits were made.

Date of Revision	Description of Revision
February 4, 2026	This impact and use policy was revised to comply with the recently passed amendment to the POST Act, Local Law 56 of 2025.

ABSTRACT

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) uses digital cameras to create still-images in order to enhance the quality of NYPD investigations, operations, and programs.

The NYPD produced this impact and use policy because digital cameras are capable of creating images of people, locations, license plates, and any other visual information within the range of the device, and sharing the images with NYPD personnel.

CAPABILITIES OF THE TECHNOLOGY

Digital cameras are used to create digital still-images, i.e. photographs, by focusing a single image onto digital light-sensors. The camera captures that image and digitally saves the image for later review and reproduction. Digital cameras provide an objective record of what occurs within the focal range of the camera.

The camera is housed so its appearance is not hidden or disguised in any way. Digital cameras used by the NYPD are not part of a larger network of cameras. Digital cameras do not use any biometric measurement technologies. NYPD digital cameras do not use facial recognition technologies and cannot conduct facial recognition analysis.¹

A digital camera application is imbedded into many NYPD issued personal electronic devices (PEDs).² Digital cameras used by the NYPD are manufactured by Nikon or Apple.

RULES, PROCESSES & GUIDELINES RELATING TO USE OF THE TECHNOLOGY

The NYPD must use digital cameras in a manner consistent with the requirements and protection of the Constitution of the United States, the New York State Constitution, and applicable statutory authorities.

NYPD digital cameras may only be used by NYPD personnel for legitimate law enforcement purposes or other official business. Usually, digital cameras are utilized for documentation purposes, such as memorializing: crime scenes and evidence, the location of physical evidence found at crime scenes, victim injuries, property damage, line-up identification procedures, personnel identification, trainings, NYPD attended community events, arrest photographs, etc.

Court Authorization: Court authorization is not necessary to use digital cameras to collect images of a location where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy, or if exigent circumstances exist. However, a warrant must first be obtained before the NYPD can use digital cameras to collect images where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy when there is no indication of exigent circumstances. The warrant is obtained with the aid of the prosecutor with proper jurisdiction. The warrant must contain a finding of probable cause by a judge, as well as an explicit authorization for entry into the queried location.

¹ However, a still image created by a NYPD digital camera may be used as a probe image for facial recognition analysis. For additional information on facial recognition, please refer to the facial recognition impact and use policy.

² For additional information on PEDs, please refer to the PED impact and use statement.

If exigent circumstances exist, an NYPD investigator must have probable cause to believe (1) a crime designated under Criminal Procedure Law Section 700.05(8), Penal Law Sections 460.10(1), 215.57, 215.56, or 240.30 has been committed, is in progress or is about to be committed; (2) an emergency exists as result of the criminal conduct; (3) there is an immediate urgent need for assistance due to an imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death to any person; and (4) the effort to locate a suspect is being undertaken with the primary concern of preventing serious injury or death and is not primarily motivated by an intent to arrest and seize evidence. The possibility of flight of a suspect does not on its own constitute exigent circumstances.

Additional Guidelines: If an NYPD investigation involving political activity requires the use of digital cameras, the Intelligence Division will use them in compliance with Department policies. The Intelligence Division is the sole entity in the NYPD that may conduct investigations involving political activity pursuant to the Revised *Handschu* Guidelines.

As with all NYPD operations, no person will be the subject of police action because of actual or perceived race, color, religion or creed, age, national origin, alienage, citizenship status, gender (including gender identity), sexual orientation, disability, marital status, partnership status, military status, or political affiliation or beliefs.

The misuse of digital cameras will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

Addendum Obligation: In accordance with the Public Oversight of Surveillance Technology Act, an addendum to this impact and use policy will be prepared as necessary to describe any additional use of digital cameras.

SAFEGUARD & SECURITY MEASURES AGAINST UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS

Physical Safeguards & Security Measures: Digital cameras are securely stored in NYPD facilities when not in use, in a location that is inaccessible to the public. Additionally, a supervisor must periodically inspect and account for the devices. Access to digital cameras is limited to NYPD personnel with an articulable need to use the technology in furtherance of a lawful duty. Access to the digital cameras is based on an officer's assignment and is rescinded when that officer's assignment no longer requires its use.

Data Safeguards & Security Measures: Images are retained within an appropriate NYPD computer or case management system. Only authorized users have access to the images. NYPD personnel utilizing computer and case management systems are authenticated by username and password. Access to case management and computer systems is limited to personnel who have an articulable need to access the system in furtherance of lawful duty. Access rights within NYPD case management and computer systems are further limited based on lawful duty. Authorized users can only access data and perform tasks allocated to them by the system administrator according to their role.

The NYPD has a multifaceted approach to secure data and user accessibility within NYPD systems. The NYPD maintains an enterprise architecture (EA) program, which includes an architecture review process to determine system and security requirements on a case-by-case basis.

System security is one of many pillars incorporated into the EA process. Additionally, all NYPD computer systems are managed by a user permission hierarchy based on rank and role via Active Directory (AD) authentication. Passwords are never stored locally; user authentication is stored within the AD. The AD is managed by a Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) to restrict/allow port access. Accessing NYPD computer systems remotely requires dual factor authentication. All data within NYPD computer systems is encrypted both in transit and at rest via Secure Socket Layer (SSL)/Transport Layer Security (TLS) certifications which follow industry best practices.

NYPD personnel must abide by security terms and conditions associated with computer and case management systems of the NYPD, including those governing user passwords and logon procedures. NYPD personnel must maintain confidentiality of information accessed, created, received, disclosed or otherwise maintained during the course of duty and may only disclose information to others, including other members of the NYPD, only as required in the execution of lawful duty.

NYPD personnel are responsible for preventing third parties from unauthorized access to information. Failure to adhere to confidentiality policies may subject NYPD personnel to disciplinary and/or criminal action. NYPD personnel must confirm the identity and affiliation of individuals requesting information from the NYPD and determine that the release of information is lawful prior to disclosure.

Unauthorized access of any system will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES RELATING TO RETENTION, ACCESS & USE OF THE DATA

Images may only be used for legitimate law enforcement purposes or other official business of the NYPD, including in furtherance of criminal investigations, civil litigations, and disciplinary proceedings. Images recorded by NYPD digital cameras are stored locally, either on the device itself or within a memory card inserted into the device. Once the memory of the digital camera reaches maximum capacity, the digital camera cannot create new images until the memory is cleared.

Relevant images may be downloaded and retained in the appropriate NYPD computer or case management system. NYPD personnel utilizing computer and case management systems are authenticated by username and password. Access to computer and case management is limited to personnel who have an articulable need to access the system in furtherance of lawful duty. Access rights within NYPD case management and computer systems are further limited based on lawful duty.

The NYPD retains and disposes of records pursuant to New York City Charter § 1133(f), (g) and (h). Pursuant to these provisions, the NYPD developed a retention schedule that was approved by the New York City Law Department and Department of Records and Information Services. This retention schedule governs the retention and disposition of NYPD records, and the NYPD retains and disposes of records pursuant to this schedule. The retention period of a “case investigation

record” depends on its classification and is based on the final disposition of the case, i.e., what the arrestee is convicted of or pleads to. Further, case investigations are not considered closed unless they result in: prosecution and appeals are exhausted, a settlement, no arrest, or when restitution is no longer sought.

The misuse of any image will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES RELATING TO PUBLIC ACCESS OR USE OF THE DATA

Members of the public may request data collected by the NYPD through its use of digital cameras pursuant to the New York State Freedom of Information Law. The NYPD will review and evaluate such requests in accordance with applicable provisions of the law.

EXTERNAL ENTITIES

Entities outside of the NYPD do not have direct access to the information and data collected by NYPD’s digital cameras.

If a digital camera obtains images related to a criminal case, the NYPD will turn the images over to the prosecutor with jurisdiction over the matter. Prosecutors will provide the images to the defendant(s) in accordance with criminal discovery laws.

Other law enforcement agencies may request images contained in NYPD computer or case management systems in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and New York City and NYPD policies. Additionally, the NYPD may provide images or information related to it to partnering law enforcement and city agencies pursuant to on-going criminal investigations, civil litigation, and disciplinary proceedings. Information will not be shared in furtherance of immigration enforcement.

Following the laws of the State and City of New York, as well as NYPD policy, the images or related information may be provided to community leaders, civic organizations and the news media in order to further an investigation, create awareness of an unusual incident, or address a community concern.

Pursuant to NYPD policy and local law, NYPD personnel may disclose identifying information externally only if:

1. Such disclosure has been authorized in writing by the individual to whom such information pertains to, or if such individual is a minor or is otherwise not legally competent, by such individual’s parent or legal guardian and has been approved in writing by the Agency Privacy Officer assigned to the Legal Bureau;
2. Such disclosure is required by law and has been approved in writing by the Agency Privacy Officer assigned to the Legal Bureau;
3. Such disclosure furthers the purpose or mission of the NYPD and has been approved in writing by the Agency Privacy Officer assigned to the Legal Bureau;

4. Such disclosure has been pre-approved as in the best interests of the City by the City Chief Privacy Officer;
5. Such disclosure has been designated as routine by the Agency Privacy Officer assigned to the Legal Bureau;
6. Such disclosure is in connection with an investigation of a crime that has been committed or credible information about an attempted or impending crime;
7. Such disclosure is in connection with an open investigation by a City agency concerning the welfare of a minor or an individual who is otherwise not legally competent.

Vendors & Contractors: The NYPD purchases digital cameras and associated equipment or software from approved vendors. The NYPD emphasizes the importance of and engages with vendors and contractors to maintain the confidentiality, availability, and integrity of NYPD technology systems.

Vendors and contractors may have access to NYPD digital camera associated software or data in the performance of contractual duties to the NYPD. Such duties are typically technical or proprietary in nature (e.g., maintenance or failure mitigation). In providing vendors and contractors access to equipment and computer systems, the NYPD follows the principle of least privilege. Vendors and contractors are only allowed access on a “need to know basis” to fulfill contractual obligations and/or agreements.

Vendors and contractors providing equipment and services to the NYPD undergo vendor responsibility determination and integrity reviews. Vendors and contractors providing sensitive equipment and services to the NYPD also undergo background checks.

Vendors and contractors are legally obligated by contracts and/or agreements to maintain the confidentiality of NYPD data and information. Vendors and contractors are subject to criminal and civil penalties for unauthorized use or disclosure of NYPD data or information.

If information obtained using digital cameras is disclosed in a manner violating the local Identifying Information Law, the NYPD Agency Privacy Officer, upon becoming aware, must report the disclosure to the NYC Chief Privacy Officer within 24 hours. The NYPD must make reasonable efforts to notify individuals affected by the disclosure in writing when there is potential risk of harm to the individual, when the NYPD determines in consultation with the NYC Chief Privacy Officer and the Law Department that notification should occur, or when legally required to do so by law or regulation. In accordance with the Identifying Information Law, the NYC Chief Privacy Officer submits a quarterly report containing an anonymized compilation or summary of such disclosures by City agencies, including those reported by the NYPD, to the Speaker of the Council and makes the report publicly available online.

TRAINING

NYPD personnel using digital cameras receive command-level training on the proper operation of the technology. NYPD personnel must use all digital cameras in compliance with NYPD policies and training.

INTERNAL AUDIT & OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS

All members of the NYPD are advised that NYPD computer systems and equipment are intended for the purposes of conducting official business. The misuse of any system will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties. Allegations of misuse are internally investigated at the command level or by the Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB).

Supervisors of personnel utilizing digital cameras are responsible for security and proper utilization of the technology and associated equipment. Supervisors are directed to inspect all areas containing NYPD computer systems at least once each tour and ensure that all systems are being used within NYPD guidelines.

Integrity Control Officers (ICOs) within each Command are responsible for maintaining the security and integrity of all recorded media in the possession of the NYPD. ICOs must ensure all authorized users of NYPD computer systems in their command understand and comply with computer security guidelines, frequently observe all areas with computer equipment, and ensure security guidelines are complied with, as well as investigating any circumstances or conditions which may indicate abuse of the computer systems.

Requests for focused audits of computer activity from IAB, Commanding Officers, ICOs, Investigations Units, and others, may be made to the Information Technology Bureau.

HEALTH & SAFETY REPORTING

There are no known tests or reports regarding the health and safety effects of digital cameras. Additionally, after a search for relevant information, no physical safety hazards identifiable by manufacturer warnings or published academic research regarding physical safety hazards have been identified pertaining to the use of digital cameras or associated equipment.

DISPARATE IMPACTS OF THE TECHNOLOGY & IMPACT & USE POLICY

The NYPD has implemented significant safeguards to ensure that digital cameras are used effectively and responsibly. The NYPD does not believe that this technology is being used in a manner that disparately impacts any protected groups as defined in the New York City Human Rights Law.

The safeguards and audit protocols built into this impact and use policy for digital cameras mitigate the risk of partial and biased law enforcement. Digital cameras only memorialize what occurs within the focal range of the camera as a still photograph. Digital cameras do not use any biometric measurement technologies. These devices are usually deployed for investigative purposes under supervisory review or for official business of the NYPD. Access is restricted to authorized personnel. Based on these safeguards, any theoretical risks of digital cameras are effectively mitigated and do not result in disparate impacts.

The NYPD is committed to the impartial enforcement of the law and to the protection of constitutional rights. The NYPD prohibits the use of racial and bias-based profiling in law enforcement actions, which must be based on standards required by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, Sections 11 and 12 of Article I of the New York State

Constitution, Section 14-151 of the New York City Administrative Code, and other applicable laws.

Race, color, ethnicity, or national origin may not be used as a motivating factor for initiating police enforcement action. Should an officer initiate enforcement action against a person, motivated even in part by a person's actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, or national origin, that enforcement action violates NYPD policy unless the officer's decision is based on a specific and reliable suspect description that includes not only race, age, and gender, but other identifying characteristics or information.