

City of Redmond Body Worn Video Redactions 2026 Cost Study

Background

In July 2022, the Redmond Police Department (RPD) implemented a Body Worn Camera (BWC) program, equipping officers with body cameras that record video footage. These recordings are considered public records under the Washington Public Records Act (RCW 42.56). The PRA allows law enforcement agencies to charge certain requestors for the reasonable costs associated with redacting BWC videos before they are disclosed. These redaction costs are separate from the copying fees that agencies are also permitted to charge. The purpose of this cost study is to establish the reasonable fee that RPD may charge requestors for redacting BWC footage.

Introduction

Under the Washington Public Records Act (RCW 42.56.240), an agency is generally allowed to charge requestors for the reasonable costs of redacting, altering, pixelating, or obscuring portions of body-worn camera recordings before they are disclosed. However, certain requestors are exempt from these charges, including:

- Any individual who was directly involved in the incident captured by the requested body-worn camera recording;
- An attorney representing an individual directly involved in the incident captured by the requested recording;
- An individual, or their attorney, requesting a recording that is relevant to a criminal case involving that person;
- The executive director from either the Washington state commission on African American affairs, Asian Pacific American affairs, or Hispanic affairs; or
- If relevant to a cause of action, an attorney representing a person in a civil case or potential civil case involving the denial of civil rights under federal or state law, or a violation of a United States Department of Justice settlement.

Principles

- Redactions are based on the parameters provided in the PRA.
- Requestors will not be charged for the following costs associated with redacting BWC recordings: software/hardware, miscellaneous supplies, training fees, and office space for staff performing the work. Under RCW 42.56.240, any agency that charges for

redaction services must use the least costly commercially available method for redacting body-worn camera footage.

Although the least expensive redaction option is technically free, it is often inefficient and of limited quality. This option typically uses basic, commercially available tools, such as open-source or very low-cost software, which can perform redactions but may have significant limitations in efficiency, accuracy, and usability. As a result, the costs of more advanced or effective software and hardware cannot be charged to requestors, because the law requires the use of the least costly method, even if it does not produce the highest-quality results.

- Requestors will only be charged the actual staff time (salary and benefits) for the length of each of the redaction(s) applied to the BWC recordings.
- The City will charge staff time (salary and benefits) for no more than the lowest paid employee assigned responsibility for redacting videos.
- The City incurs substantial costs for video management, processing, storage, and redaction technology.
- In addition to allowable redaction costs, requestors are charged the actual cost of copying body-worn camera (BWC) recordings, as outlined in the Public Records Act (PRA). The cost of copies for BWC footage is specified in the City of Redmond's existing fee schedule, which is publicly available on the City's website. This schedule details the fees for various public records requests, including the cost of copying BWC recordings."

Types of Redactions

- Targeted Video Redaction of Person or Object with or without Targeted Audio Redaction: This blurs or blacks out the face or identifying features of an individual or object.
- Targeted Audio Redaction Alone: This removes exempt portions of the audio without redaction of related video.
- Screen Blur or Blackout: This blurs or blacks out the entire screen for a segment of video containing an exempt image, such as a Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) with exempt screen content, the interior of a place of residence where a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy, the interior of a medical or mental health facility, etc.

City Staff Time Actual Cost Estimating Figures (2026)

In calculating the actual cost of staff time per minute, the City used the following 2026 numbers to estimate figures:

Annual Staff Cost (Salary+ Benefits) of the lowest paid employee assigned responsibility for redacting videos. The fee is based on the pay rate of the lowest-paid employee who may be assigned to the body-worn camera redaction task. This approach ensures consistency and

fairness, as it avoids the potential fluctuations that could occur if we relied on an average or median pay rate, which could change throughout the year due to step increases or turnover.

Police Support Administrative Specialist:

Annual Salary (2026)	\$81,466
Annual Benefits (2026)	\$28,439
Total Annual Salary & Benefits (2026) =	\$109,905

Minutes Worked by Staff Per Year:

- 2,080 hours per year x 60 minutes per hour = 124,800 minutes per year.

The 2,080 hours serves as the baseline to calculate the per-minute employee rate. This figure represents the total annual hours worked by staff but is not the actual number of hours billed. Only the time spent specifically on body-worn camera (BWC) redactions will be charged, with the 2,080 hours used solely to determine the rate per minute for that work.

Actual Cost Per minute of Staff Time:

Annual Salary & Benefits / 124,800 minutes per year = Staff cost per minute
\$109,905/124,800 minutes= \$0.88 Per Minute

Example of Total Fee Charged:

If a 17-minute, 36-second body-worn camera (BWC) video requires 6 minutes and 15 seconds of redaction, the fee would be calculated as follows:

6.25 minutes (the decimal equivalent of 6 minutes and 15 seconds) multiplied by the rate of \$0.88, resulting in a charge of \$5.50.

The time spent on redactions is converted into decimal form to provide an accurate reflection of the time worked. In this example, 6 minutes and 15 seconds is converted to 6.25 minutes, where 15 seconds is a quarter of a minute (0.25). This conversion is a straightforward mathematical process and does not involve rounding.

Conclusion

The Redmond Police Department (RPD) has developed a clear and consistent methodology for charging requestors the reasonable costs of redacting body-worn camera (BWC) footage, in compliance with the Washington Public Records Act (RCW 42.56). Fees are based on actual staff time spent on redactions, calculated at a rate of \$0.88 per minute, ensuring fairness and transparency. This approach reflects the direct time spent on redactions, avoids charging for overhead costs such as software, hardware, and office space, and ensures that costs remain reasonable while maintaining public access to records.