

THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

GENERAL ORDER OF THE PRESIDING

JUDGE IN RE: PHOTOGRAPHY, FILMING,

RECORDING, AND BROADCASTING

Amended General order no. GO-2026-001

The purpose of this General Order is to protect all persons with business in the courthouses and court facilities of the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Barbara; to ensure the safe, secure, and orderly conduct of hearings, trials, and other court proceedings; facilitate the safe, secure, and efficient handling of court business; and to ensure the right to public access without undue interference or delay. Any prior order is rescinded upon issuance of this order.

This General Order is made pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 10.603, which vests in the Presiding Judge the authority to establish court policies, and rule 1.150, which governs media coverage within the courthouse and court facilities.

WHEREFORE, it is ordered:

I. DEFINITIONS

A. For the purpose of this General Order, the term, "Court" refers to the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Barbara.

B. "Media" or "media agency" and "media coverage" are defined pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 1.150.

1. "Media" and "media agency" shall mean any person or organization engaging in news gathering or reporting and includes any newspaper, radio, or television station or network, news service, magazine, trade paper, in-house publication, professional journal, or other news-reporting or news-gathering agency.

1 2. "Media coverage" shall mean any photographing, recording, or broadcasting
2 of court proceedings by the media using television, radio, photographic, or
3 recording equipment.

4 C. "Courthouse" shall mean any building containing at least one (1) courtroom. It shall
5 also mean that portion of a multi-purpose commercial or private building that
6 contains at least one (1) courtroom.

7 D. "Court facility" shall mean any building, or that portion of a multi-purpose
8 commercial or private building, where official court business is conducted.

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10 II. PROHIBITIONS

11 A. Absent prior written authorization of the Presiding Judge or their designee, there
12 shall be no photographing, recording, or broadcasting by the media, attorneys,
13 parties, or members of the public within any of its courthouses and/or court facilities,
14 including but not limited to courtrooms, jury assembly rooms, entrances and exits,
15 lobby areas, hallways, stairs, elevators, and business offices except:

16 1. Media and media agencies as permitted within a courtroom by a judicial officer
17 pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 1.150, and those areas that may be
18 specifically designated by the Court as media areas.

19 2. Santa Barbara County Sheriff Deputies assigned to the Court Services Unit as
20 permitted in the limited exception request, see attached appendix A.

21 3. This order is not intended to restrict the ability to photograph, film, or broadcast
22 from outside of any courthouse or court facility, provided such activity does not
23 obstruct access to or from the courthouse or court facility.

24 4. This order is not intended to restrict the ability to photograph, film, or broadcast
25 from the hallways of the Anacapa Historic Courthouse by touring members of the
26 public as long as the photography, filming and broadcasting does not capture any
27 persons involved in a court proceeding, jurors, judicial officers, and court employees.

- 1 B. Videotaping, photography, and electronic recording devices must not be
2 activated while they are transported within any courthouse, court facility, or
3 courtroom.
- 4 C. Videotaping, photography, and electronic recording of the interior of any courthouse,
5 court facility, or courtroom through the windows or doors of any courthouse, court
6 facility, or courtroom is prohibited.
- 7 D. Jurors may not be videotaped, photographed, or electronically recorded within a
8 courthouse, court facility, or courtroom at any time. Videotaping, photography, and
9 electronic recording of any consenting juror may only take place outside of the
10 courthouse, court facility, and courtroom unless otherwise permitted by court order.
- 11 E. Videotaping, photography, and electronic recording of any consenting spectator or
12 other member of the public, except as permitted in II. A.3. of this order, may only
13 take place outside of the courthouse, court facility, and courtroom unless otherwise
14 permitted by court order.
- 15 F. Judicial officers of the Superior Court of California for the County of Santa Barbara
16 may not be videotaped, photographed, or electronically recorded within a
17 courthouse, court facility, or courtroom without a court order.
- 18 G. Employees of the Superior Court of California for the County of Santa Barbara may
19 not be videotaped, photographed, or electronically recorded within a courthouse,
20 court facility, or courtroom.
- 21 H. Cell phones or other camera-enabled devices and devices that capture digital
22 images, such as watches, PDAs, tablets, iPads, and iPods, may be brought into a
23 courthouse, court facility, or courtroom, as long as the image capturing features are
24 not activated, used, or displayed without the prior written authorization of the Court.
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1 III. EXCEPTIONS

2 A. This General Order is not intended to interfere with or restrict the rights of the media
3 to request permission from a judicial officer to allow media coverage within a
4 particular courtroom, nor to interfere with the authority of each judicial officer to rule
5 on requests pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 1.150.

6 B. Requests for any other exception to this General Order must be submitted to the
7 Court Executive Officer for the consideration of the Presiding Judge or their
8 designee. All such requests shall be made in writing and shall include a statement of
9 facts in support of the request.

10 C. Requests to photograph or film unoccupied or unused courtrooms, jury rooms, or
11 employee work areas must be submitted to the Court Executive Officer. All such
12 requests shall be made in writing and shall include a statement of facts in support of
13 the request.

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15 IV. SEVERABILITY

16 Should any provision of this General Order be held invalid, the validity of the other
17 provisions of this General Order shall not be affected.

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19 V. NOTICE

20 It is ordered that this General Order shall be posted at each public entrance to a
21 courthouse and on the Court's webpage. The Sheriff of Santa Barbara County and their
22 deputies are directed to serve a copy of this General Order on any person or organization
23 who appears to be in violation thereof, to advise the person or organization of the apparent
24 violation, and to immediately notify Court Executive Officer and Presiding Judge to
25 determine what, if any, action should be taken to address the apparent violation of court
26 order.

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28 VI. PENALTIES

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- A. A violation of this General Order may be the basis for an Order terminating further media coverage; a citation for contempt; confiscation of recording equipment, including but not limited to, cell phones, tablets or other camera-enabled devices, and other devices that capture digital images; and/or an order imposing monetary or other sanctions.
- B. A violation of this General Order may also result in imprisonment in the county jail for up to six months, or by a fine of up to \$1,000, or by both, pursuant to Penal Code section 166(a)(4).

DATE: 7/24/2026



HON. PATRICIA L. KELLY
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court

Appendix A

Request for Limited Exception Re: Use of Law
Enforcement Body-Worn Cameras

Office of the Sheriff



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

BILL BROWN
Sheriff-Coroner

BRAD WELCH
Undersheriff

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July 23, 2026

REQUEST FOR LIMITED EXCEPTION TO COURT POLICY REGARDING THE USE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT BODY-WORN CAMERAS

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office respectfully requests authorization for a limited exception to the General Order of the Presiding Judge GO-2026-001 prohibiting audio and video recording within court facilities and court campuses. This request is intended to permit the activation of law enforcement body-worn cameras only under prescribed and extraordinary circumstances where recording would serve a legitimate law enforcement, investigative, safety, or evidentiary purpose.

The Sheriff's Office fully recognizes and supports the Court's interest in maintaining the integrity of judicial proceedings and protecting the privacy and decorum of courtroom operations. Accordingly, this request is not intended to permit routine recording during normal court operations, judicial proceedings, or day-to-day interactions within court facilities.

Under this proposal, Sheriff's Deputies assigned to Court Services would not activate the recording function of their body-worn cameras during routine duties or courtroom proceedings. Activation would be limited to circumstances involving emergencies, criminal investigations, threats to public safety, disturbances, or other incidents requiring immediate law enforcement intervention.

The Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office Body-Worn Camera Policy #450.5 requires activation during many law enforcement contacts and investigative activities, including but not limited to:

- Enforcement and investigative contacts, including field interviews and detentions;
- Traffic enforcement and crime interdiction activities;
- Self-initiated law enforcement actions that would otherwise require notification to dispatch;
- Miranda advisements and the obtaining of verbal consent to search;
- Contacts that become adversarial or confrontational; and
- Other circumstances where recording is necessary to document law enforcement actions or preserve evidence.

While many areas of the court campus are monitored by the Court's security surveillance system, those systems do not capture audio recordings and may not fully document events from the perspective of responding law enforcement personnel. Additionally, not all areas of the Courts campuses are covered by surveillance cameras.



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Body-worn camera recordings can provide critical evidence during investigations, use-of-force incidents, threats against court personnel, disturbances, criminal conduct, and other significant events occurring within court facilities.

Examples of circumstances in which activation of body-worn cameras may be appropriate include:

- Violent or disruptive incidents requiring the evacuation of a courtroom;
- Threats against judicial officers, court staff, litigants, or members of the public;
- Physical altercations or assaults occurring within court facilities;
- Criminal acts occurring on court property;
- Investigations conducted by Sheriff's Court Services personnel within areas under Sheriff's Office jurisdiction;
- Responses to suspicious persons, suspicious packages, or potential security threats;
- Critical incidents requiring coordinated law enforcement response; and
- Medical emergencies where documentation of the circumstances, statements, and response may assist future investigations, risk management, or litigation defense.

In addition, Sheriff's Deputies or other law enforcement personnel will respond to reports of harassment, threats, disturbances, and criminal activity involving members of the public within and near court facilities and secured areas. These incidents frequently require law enforcement personnel to make rapid decisions and take enforcement action under dynamic and often unpredictable circumstances. Body-worn camera recordings provide an objective account of events and can assist in accurately documenting incidents, preserving evidence, protecting all parties involved, and resolving complaints or claims arising from such encounters.

The Sheriff's Office acknowledges that not every circumstance requiring body-worn camera activation can be anticipated or specifically identified in advance. Therefore, this request seeks authorization for the activation of body-worn cameras during extraordinary incidents that fall outside the normal day-to-day operation of the Superior Court and where a legitimate law enforcement purpose exists.

The Sheriff's Office respectfully requests the Court's consideration and approval of this limited exception so that deputies may effectively fulfill their public safety responsibilities while continuing to respect the Court's policies, authority, and operational needs.

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The Sheriff's Office further proposes that body-worn camera recordings obtained pursuant to this exception remain subject to all applicable laws, evidentiary rules, and Sheriff's Office policies governing retention, dissemination, and disclosure.

Respectfully submitted,

Lieutenant Neil Gowing

Judicial Services Bureau