



Policies and Procedures

Video Surveillance Policy

Policy:

The State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry reserves the right to place video surveillance cameras on campus where necessary and appropriate.

SUNY-ESF respects the privacy of the university community members and takes pains to balance that privacy against safety needs on campus. Cameras extend the protection of University Police, even when officers are not in an immediate area. Cameras are not a guarantee of safety but are a tool that assists University Police. Cameras protect campus community members from dangers by serving as deterrents and alerting police to dangers. Cameras are never used to monitor or track campus community members.

This policy does not apply to legitimate academic use of video cameras for educational purposes, to cameras used for journalism, or to private video cameras owned and operated by members of the campus community.

This policy does not apply to covert cameras used by University Police or another law enforcement agency for criminal surveillance as governed by the New York Penal Law.

Definition of Terms:

Video Surveillance Camera: a camera device that is capable of capturing images, (not audio) viewable by the naked eye and transferring such images to a data storage system.

Data Storage System: a dedicated computer resident in the University Police main office.

Public Area: an area open for public use where the expectation of privacy is not violated by what could normally be openly observed, such as the campus quad, an academic hallway, classroom, public computing cluster, all outdoor areas.

Private Areas: areas such as bathrooms, shower areas, locker and changing rooms, areas where a reasonable person might change clothing, or private offices. The only exceptions are cameras used narrowly to secure money, documents, supplies from theft, destruction, or tampering.



Policies and Procedures

Temporary Video Surveillance Cameras: are defined as cameras that are established by the University Police to provide additional security for a campus event or situation, and that are not in place for more than 30 days.

Permanent Video Surveillance Cameras: are established as part of the campus infrastructure and require planning and approval by the office of the Vice President of Administration.

Camera Placement:

SUNY ESF University Police currently monitor video surveillance cameras located in public areas on campus. These cameras capture images only, no audio.

Placement of video surveillance cameras shall be the responsibility of the Chief of University Police and/or the Vice President for Administration and shall conform to applicable federal and state laws.

This policy does not apply to covert cameras used by University Police or another law enforcement agency for criminal surveillance as governed by the New York Penal Law.

Cameras may not be established in private areas of the campus without obtaining a warrant and only subject to appropriate legal authority.

Video surveillance cameras shall not be directed or zoomed into the windows of any private residential building including residence halls.

This policy prohibits the use of empty dummy or placebo cameras.

Video Surveillance Camera Use and Nonuse:

Video surveillance cameras are not to be used to monitor individual students, faculty, or staff, except as necessary for a criminal investigation and except as in accordance with the terms of a warrant. Cameras may be used to monitor a student or employee work area, such as an area with financial transactions, even if there is only one student, faculty, or staff member employed in that work area. Cameras used to monitor a work area will not be used to view the contents of computer screens.

Video surveillance cameras will not be used by the college to evaluate employee performance or to monitor employees during their non-working time.

Video surveillance cameras shall be used exclusively for campus safety purposes.



Policies and Procedures

Video Surveillance Camera Monitoring:

Video may only be monitored by the ESF University Police staff or other personnel authorized by the Chief of University Police. No unapproved employees may monitor or view video for any reason except as necessary in the course of an investigation or adjudication.

If University Police feels it is necessary to aid in an investigation or search, small video clips or image stills may be released to the media or the public. Prior to releasing the video clip or image still, the face and identifying features of all those on video but not of interest to the investigation will be blurred.

All ESF University Police Officers approved to monitor video shall receive a copy of this policy and provide written acknowledgement that they have read and understand this policy. Officers will receive any and all updates or amendments to this policy.

Video or Other Storage Media:

Video tapes or other media will be stored and transported in a manner that preserves security. Current and archived tapes or media shall be kept locked and secured.

Recordings not related to or used for an investigation shall be kept confidential and destroyed on a regular basis. All recordings used for an investigation or prosecution of a crime shall be retained until the end of the proceeding and appeal period unless directed otherwise by a court of law.

No recording shall be altered in any manner. The only narrow exception allows for faces of nonparticipants in an incident to be blurred for privacy reasons in the event a video or still image is provided to the media.

SUNY ESF currently maintains a closed circuit video surveillance system not available on the internet.

Destruction or Tampering with Video Surveillance Equipment:

Any person who tampers with or destroys a video surveillance camera or any part of the video surveillance system may be prosecuted in the criminal justice system as well as the campus judicial system.