

WORKERS DEFENSE ALLIANCE

**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS +
HOW TO COPWATCH**

WHO WE ARE

THE WORKERS DEFENSE ALLIANCE IS A DEMOCRATIC AND AUTONOMOUS AFFILIATION WITH THE GOAL OF ORGANIZING AND DEFENDING ALL MEMBERS OF THE WORKING CLASS.

WE DO THIS ON VARIOUS FRONTS THAT ARE CRITICAL TO OUR COMMUNITIES, SUCH AS:

- ▶ **TENANTS RIGHTS,**
- ▶ **LEGAL DEFENSE,**
- ▶ **SAFE NEEDLE AND NARCAN ACCESS,**
- ▶ **WORKPLACE ORGANIZING,**
- ▶ **AND ANTI-FASCIST WORK.**

WE ARE INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING AND USING TRAININGS LIKE THIS ONE TO SPREAD SKILLS OF SELF ADVOCACY AND AUTONOMY, AND TO BUILD AND WORKING CLASS COALITION ACROSS THE TWIN CITIES. IF YOU HAVE ANY INTEREST WORKING WITH US OR HAVE ANY SKILLS TO SHARE, WE'D LOVE TO TALK TO YOU.

WHY DO WE COP WATCH?

We Copwatch to:

- ▶ **Protect the rights of others, particularly those vulnerable to police repression, due to race, housing status, gender, or sexual orientation.**
- ▶ **Reduce racial profiling, sexual assault, and other forms of abuse of power by police.**
- ▶ **Present evidence in support of a person wrongfully targeted, arrested, or otherwise harmed by police**
- ▶ **Educate the public about police misconduct and NORMALIZE COMMUNITY SELF DEFENSE**

WHAT IS COPWATCH - HISTORY OF COP WATCH

Copwatching is a form of direct action in which autonomous, loosely affiliated groups set out to observe and document police activity as a way of preventing police misconduct and brutality. Using their presence, written documentation, and film, communities can exercise their rights and advocate for the rights of others. Copwatch in some form or other has been most frequently taken up by marginalized communities who are most vulnerable to legal and state repression.

The term “Policing the Police” originated with the **Black Panther Party** in the 1960’s. In response to OPD’s targeting of the black community, The Black Panthers would drive around Oakland tailing police vehicles, coming out armed with rifles and law books whenever an officer stopped anyone.

Later on, in 1990, students and teachers at **UC Berkeley** organized street patrols on Telegraph Ave to combat police crackdowns on the homeless population. These patrols focused on observing, recording, and questioning the actions of police. They were inspired by members of the **Prison Welfare Project** in South Africa, where community members advocated for detainees during Apartheid and kept tabs on SA law enforcement.

WHAT IS COPWATCH - HISTORY OF COP WATCH

The Twin Cities has a Long History of Community Self Defense

The 67' Riot on Plymouth Ave was sparked by rampant police violence against the black community in North Minneapolis. Community members banded together to deal with the problem.

"One of these programs was the "Black Patrol," started by a group of community members that patrolled Black communities in much the same way that the Black Panthers were doing in Oakland. In partnership with "The Way," an anti-racist community center, they also established the "Soul Force" in 1968, a patrol group dedicated to nonviolence and made up of volunteers of many racial backgrounds."

In 1968, members of the Native Community founded the AIM Patrol to deter the MPD's excessive repression and incarceration of Native Americans living in Phillips.

Volunteers would observe and document police in addition to de-escalating conflicts between community members. They were highly effective and reduced arrests in their neighborhood almost immediately. Though the 1st patrol disbanded in 1975, they have made reappearances over the past 20 years. The American Indian Movement still exists today and continues to fight for Indigenous sovereignty.

Source - MPD 150

RECENT EXAMPLES OF COP WATCH

COPWATCHING HAS SEEN A RESURGENCE IN RECENT YEARS IN RESPONSE TO AN ABUNDANCE OF HIGH PROFILE OFFICER INVOLVED KILLINGS. IN 2014 THE MURDERS OF MICHAEL BROWN AND FREDDIE GRAY CAUSED THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES IN FERGUSSON AND BALTIMORE TO BEGIN THEIR OWN STREET PATROLS, LED BY DAVID WHITT AND KEVIN MOORE.

IS COPWATCHING LEGAL?

YES - BUT:

Your Constitutional Rights:

- ▶ **1st Amendment** - Free speech and freedom to record public officials performing public duties.
- ▶ **4th Amendment** - Prohibits illegal search and seizure of your person or belongings. (You cannot be searched without probable cause or a warrant signed by a judge.)
- ▶ **14th Amendment** - Ensures you receive due process if any of your rights are violated.

However: Just because it's legal, doesn't mean the police will let you. Be prepared for the possibility of retaliatory seizure of your camera/phone or arrest of yourself/your comrades.

TYPES OF COP WATCH

PASSIVE COPWATCH

- ▶ **Copwatch can be done any time you hear sirens or see police**, whether you are on the way to work, out running errands, or sitting at home. **The light rail is a great place to do Copwatch**, especially if you're traveling late at night.
- ▶ **Copwatch can carry risks when done alone**, but we can't always control when or where we need to act. **Take extra precautions** if you find yourself in a situation where you need to Copwatch alone.

TYPES OF COP WATCH

ACTIVE PATROLS

FOOT PATROLS

- ▶ On foot, you can get closer **for a better shot and easier interaction with the person(s) being detained by the police.** Foot patrols also make it easier to engage with the people and explain what you're out doing -- you're more visible on foot patrol, **and spreading the message is an important part of the work.**
- ▶ **Foot patrols work best when you're covering a small area that is densely populated.**

TYPES OF COP WATCH

ACTIVE PATROLS

CAR PATROLS

- ▶ Useful if you have a wide area to patrol, cars also make it easier to respond quickly to reports of police activity over a signal loop or via police scanner.
- ▶ Cars come with some drawbacks -- cars can't reach every police interaction, and if you are stopped blocking traffic you may increase the likelihood that police will interfere with your recording and that you may face legal repercussions.

DRIVERS SHOULD HAVE ALL OF THEIR DOCUMENTS UP TO DATE, IN CASE AN OFFICER ASKS FOR THEM. DRIVE SAFELY AND CAREFULLY.

TYPES OF COP WATCH

ACTIVE PATROLS

BIKE PATROLS

- ▶ Bikes can be a great middle ground between foot patrols and car patrols, increasing the distance you can cover and the speed with which you do it, without sacrificing much in terms of terrain access.
- ▶ Like foot patrols, it's easier to get close to a police encounter and get a clear recording and consent from the person(s) being detained. However, like car patrols, you're not as visible in transit and cannot engage as much with the community.

(WE'VE PERSONALLY FOUND COMBINED BIKE AND FOOT PATROLS REALLY USEFUL)

TYPES OF COP WATCH

ACTIVE PATROLS

EVENT PATROLS

Marches, protests, and other public events can be a great time to Copwatch. Any time there is increased interaction between people and police is a good time to be ready with your phone and patrol.

Groups will sometimes ramp up patrols in the summer or in anticipation of citywide events, when police activity is higher.

ORGANIZING PATROLS

3 or more people is ideal for patrols – there is safety in numbers, & this way each person can focus on playing a different role.

ORGANIZING PATROLS

ROLES

Camera Person

Focus on getting a clear shot of what the police are doing, without getting too close. Clearly narrate what you are observing and repeat any information given by officers or by the detained. If an officer asks you to step back, verbally affirm that you are complying - then point your camera down at your feet and record yourself stepping backwards.

RESPECT THE PRIVACY AND DIGNITY OF THE PERSON WHO IS BEING DETAINED OR ARRESTED. DON'T FILM SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT WANT TO BE FILMED. NEVER POST OR SHARE VIDEO FOOTAGE OF A POLICE ENCOUNTER OR ARREST WITHOUT THE EXPLICIT CONSENT OF THE PERSONS FILMED OR THAT OF THEIR PARENTS.

TOOLS

ROLES

Transcriber

Write down details you observe and important info! These can include:

- The time and date and location (cross streets) of incident.
- Names and badge numbers of involved officers
- Name of person(s) being detained or arrested and are being taken.
- Contact info for person being detained or their emergency contact.
- Details and plates of any vehicles present
- As many details about what happened and in what order as you can record or remember.

It is also helpful to record what is going on in your surroundings before and after you encounter police.

If needed, these details can be submitted as part of a sworn affidavit in defense of person who was detained or arrested if their rights are violated.

ORGANIZING PATROLS

ROLES

Police Liaison

Police liaison communicates directly with police and advocates for the rights of the person who is being stopped, detained, or arrested.

Approach the scene within full view of the officers present. Keep your hands visible at all times. Identify yourself as Copwatch. Inform them that you do not want to interfere and simply wish to observe.

Ask clear questions with a definitive answer. Police are required to give you their name and badge number if you ask for it.

Police are trained to regard all civilians as a potential threat and can be volatile if they feel challenged. Your goal is to observe and de-escalate. Don't be insulting or try to force a confrontation, which could be dangerous or even deadly for all involved.

ORGANIZING PATROLS

ROLES

Police Liaison - Cont'd

Ask the Cops:

- ▶ "What is your name and Badge Number?"
- ▶ "Why are you stopping them?"
- ▶ "What Penal Code are you enforcing?"
- ▶ "Where are you taking them?" (if person is being arrested)

Ask the Detainee:

- ▶ "What is your name?"
- ▶ "Do you know why you are being stopped?"
- ▶ "What is your phone number/The phone number of someone you want us to call?"

TAKE IT SERIOUSLY

CONSIDERATIONS WHILE PATROLLING

Talk to people around you and tell them what you are doing and why. Distribute literature if you can.

Be prepared for police to try to obscure the truth of what is going on/ intimidate you into leaving.

Don't give the Police any reason to arrest you. Don't Copwatch under the influence or while carrying anything illegal. Don't even jaywalk if you can avoid it.

The focus should always be on the safety of the person being detained or arrested. Copwatch should be neutral or de-escalatory factor in any given interaction.

Stay on the scene with the person being detained until the Police leave. If the person wants to take action, provide them with your documentation, inform them of their rights. If you can, connect them with local low cost legal services.

If possible, ensure they leave the scene safely.

TOOLS

ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT AND APPS

Messaging

Signal: Needs reliable internet connection, encrypts messages and phone calls. Prevents outsiders from intercepting and listening into communications. Not 100% secure but preferable to calling/texting outright, which uses 0 encryption and can be intercepted at any time.

Zello: Walkie talkie application available for Iphone and Android. Allows for communication between multiple patrol squads in a given area.

Scanners

Police Scanner (Gordon Edwards): Needs reliable internet connection to work on phone, allows user to listen in on police communications. Essential tool for locating keeping abreast of police tactics, formations crime scenes etc (at 90 seconds)

TOOLS

ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT AND APPS

Recording/Sharing/Storage

Digital Camera: Always a reliable choice. The video is on the camera until it can be uploaded to another device, so if it's confiscated or broken, which happens sometimes, that's it for that.

Periscope: Owned by Twitter, but can be connected to a google account. There is an in app option for storing directly on your phone as well.

iCloud Storage/Google Photos: iPhone enables automatic backup of photos and videos via iCloud storage, so if your phone is confiscated, you can access and download your original video files onto another device.

You can also do this on android via the google photos app, bear in mind that only videos taken through the phones camera (and not through an app like whatsapp or obscuracam) are automatically backed up.

ADVANCING A COPWATCH PROGRAM

ORGANIZING : WE CAN HELP

- ▶ Tips on organizing & connecting with related trainings & resources.
- ▶ Secure your devices and reduce your digital footprint.
- ▶ Help with bail defense if needed.
- ▶ Helping get your neighborhood copwatch off the ground.

CONTACT US : TWINCTIESCOPWATCH@PROTONMAIL.COM

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- ▶ **COPWATCH by WeCopwatch on Amazon Prime (Sorry) and Kanopy**
- ▶ **GROUND ZERO: Fergusson by WeCopwatch**
- ▶ **COPWATCH: These Streets are Watching on YouTube**
- ▶ **Fighting Police Abuse: Community Action Manual by the ACLU**
- ▶ **UAPTSD.ORG - Copwatch Training Manual**

FOR MORE INFORMATION: CONT'D

▶ **CUAPB Website - Know Your Rights Handouts in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. Fact sheets on police brutality and the history of policing.**

MPD 150: This project chronicles the history of police in the united states and the MPD specifically, it contains a wealth of information for people who want to learn more about the nature of policing as well as alternative means of creating community safety.

Big Door Brigade: This is a multifaceted project that compiles helpful info for organizing mutual aid & community self defense projects such as, ~~jail and legal support~~, sex worker support, harm reduction, and more.