



COPWATCH VANCOUVER

we watch the cops

■ INTRODUCTION

This manual has been adopted for use in Vancouver, British Columbia from "The Copwatch Manual, An Introduction to Citizen Monitoring of the Police" produced by the Berkeley, California chapter of Copwatch. The original version can be found at <http://copwatch.home.sprynet.com/cwindex2.htm>.

The original handbook was intended to introduce people to the main concepts of police observation. Berkeley Copwatch recognised that people in different locations will devise Copwatching methods that best suit their own situations. The information in the manual was meant to stimulate discussion in organisations and to provide a basis for forming police monitoring projects. The Vancouver Copwatch manual is intended to be a work in progress.

WHO IS COPWATCH?

We are a group of community residents and students who are outraged by police misconduct, harassment and brutality. We have joined together to fight for our rights and the rights of our community by taking on the task of directly monitoring police conduct. We walk the streets and watch the police. Although it is important to resist police brutality by taking police officers to court, filing complaints and having demonstrations, we believe that it is crucial to be in the streets letting the police know that the people will hold them accountable for their behaviour in the community.

We have no single political or religious belief. Our volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds. What we share is the belief that citizen participation and monitoring of the police is a crucial first step towards building a movement that is capable of stopping police violence, and of challenging the increasingly powerful role of police throughout our society.

If you have been a victim of police abuse, have witnessed abuse or are just plain fed up with police misconduct and want to do something about it, give us a call. We will train you to Copwatch. We also need artists, writers, researchers, outreach workers, organisers and others to help.

We are an all-volunteer group so your help is always needed!

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■ PURPOSE AND GOALS

General

- To reduce police violence and harassment through accountability

Observe and document

- Directly observe the police on the street
- Identify police (name, badge number, department, car license plate)
- Record with camera, video camera if possible
- Write detailed report describing the incident
- Collect witness statements

Legal support and law reform

- Follow up with public pressure in legal proceedings
- Support brutality victims in defence of false charges
- Direct people to the Pivot Affidavit Program
- Encourage people to file complaints or even sue police
- Lobby to stop discriminatory legislation and policies that increase police powers over people's civil and human rights

Community support

- To empower and unite the community by looking out for each other
- Educate the community about their rights by distributing Pivot Rights Cards
- Expand community support for victims of police crime
- Publicise incidents through newsletters and local press
- Broaden community understanding of issues related to police violence
- Encourage people to solve problems without police intervention
- Encourage people to exercise their right to observe the police

■ THE LAW

It is helpful for Copwatchers to have an understanding of a few key legal concepts before going out to watch the police. You do not have to be a lawyer to document police activity, but if you want to be more assertive about your rights and those of the community, it is worth taking some time to become familiar with the law.

There are many sources of law. The ones that are most relevant to Copwatch are the *Criminal Code of Canada* and Vancouver municipal bylaws. It is also important to note that everyone's rights and freedoms are, at least theoretically, protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

TYPES OF VIOLATIONS

Municipal Bylaw Infractions

These are minor offences such as jaywalking, loitering, littering, spray painting and soliciting. Penalties are usually a fine, but infractions can sometimes result in imprisonment. Violations of these offences do not result in a criminal record.

When an officer sees this kind of activity, he or she can ask to see I.D. If you have I.D., and you do not have any outstanding warrants, the cop should just write you a ticket and be done with it. If you do not have I.D. on you, the officer has the option of taking you to the station to verify your identity, or simply writing you a ticket and letting you go. This is up to the officer.

Summary Conviction Offences

These are the less serious criminal offences and provincial offences. For example, causing a disturbance, loitering and indecent exposure are summary convictions. The maximum penalty is a \$2000 fine and/or 6 months imprisonment.

You might be issued an appearance notice there and then, or you could be arrested and taken to jail. You might be released on bail or your own recognizance soon after you are taken to jail, or detained until you are arraigned (a court appearance where you enter a plea). You could be searched when arrested for a summary conviction offence.

Indictable Offences

These are more serious criminal offences, such as aggravated sexual assault, murder, robbery and trafficking of certain drugs.

Expect that you will be searched thoroughly and will be in custody at least until you are arraigned.

Hybrid Offences

The Crown has the option of treating the offence as an indictable offence or a summary conviction offence. Examples include theft, obstructing police and possession of a controlled substance.

STOPS AND SEARCHES

It is very important that you understand why an officer is stopping someone and what their rights are when they are stopped.

Types of stops

Consensual stops

If the police approach you and start talking to you, ask if you are free to go. You do not have to identify yourself or answer their questions.

Detention

If you have asked whether you are free to go and the police say “no,” you are being detained — the police are investigating you because they believe you have committed or are about to commit a crime. Ask why you are being detained. You do not have to identify yourself or answer their questions — you have to identify yourself only if you are told you have broken the law. The police must tell you of your right to a lawyer. The police can pat you down and might look in anything you are carrying, but only if they have a good reason for your detention. Their reason has to be more than a hunch.

Arrests

If you are arrested, the police must tell you what you are charged with, and tell you that you have the right to a lawyer. You must tell them your name, address and birth date, if they ask. The police are allowed to search you when you are under arrest. You could be released right away, and issued an appearance notice that telling you where and when to appear in court. Or you could be held for up to 24 hours and released after appearing in front of a judge or justice of the peace.

Arrests are usually made using physical contact, from a simple touch to more extreme uses of force, with an indication that the person is under arrest. If an officer does not have physical contact and the person does not acquiesce to the arrest, there is no lawful arrest. However, it is not advisable to run from the police.

You can be arrested only in these circumstances:

- the police have seen you committing an offence,
- the police have reasonable grounds for their belief that you have committed an indictable or hybrid offence,
- you have broken a law (including provincial laws or city bylaws) and you will not provide the police with your name, address and birth date.
- there is a warrant for your arrest,
- the police have a reason to think you have a mental disorder and are dangerous,
- you have breached the peace or are drunk in a public place, or
- the police have a reason to believe you are a terrorist about to commit a terrorist act.

Identifying yourself

You must identify yourself to the police only in these situations:

- if you are arrested or have broken any law, including criminal, provincial laws or city bylaws (if you do not identify yourself, you can be charged with obstruction),
- if you are driving a vehicle (you must show your driver's licence),
- if you are in a bar or movie theatre (you must prove you are old enough to be there), or
- if you are in a park (municipal bylaws might require you to identify yourself to police).

If you lie about your name, address or birth date, you can be charged with obstructing justice or obstructing the police. You are not required to carry identification with you unless you are driving a vehicle.

Speaking to the police

You have the right to remain silent. Whether you are stopped by the police or arrested, you never have to make a statement to the police. The only thing you would have to tell the police is your name, address and birth date, and only if you have broken a law. This right is protected by s. 7 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Section 7 does not affect the right of the police to use undercover officers. The police are allowed to question suspects not under arrest. And the police are not required to advise the accused of the right to remain silent, even when they are arrested.

Anything you say to the police can be used as evidence against you. If you are arrested and you ask for a lawyer, the police must stop questioning you. However, often they will still try to get information from you. The police use interrogation techniques designed to make people give statements, so it is important to remember that you have a right to remain silent.

Searches

You cannot be searched unless:

- you are arrested (the police can do a full search of you and your possessions),
- you are detained (the police can pat you down to feel for weapons that you might use against them or yourself, but they cannot search for drugs or needle marks if you are detained without charge),
- you have a search clause as a condition of probation,
- you consent to a search (but you never have to consent to a search), or
- the police have a reason to believe you are carrying drugs, a weapon or open alcohol.

Otherwise, any search by the police is illegal. You do not have to agree to be searched – tell the police you are not consenting if they try to search you outside of these circumstances.

If you are arrested, the police can conduct:

- **A summary search** – A pat down or frisking over clothes and inside pockets.
- **A strip search** – A visual inspection of you with your clothes removed.
- **A body cavity search** – Involves a physical inspection of the genital or anal regions.

Strip searches should not be done by an officer of the opposite sex or in a public area, and the police are not supposed to conduct strip searches routinely. They must have reasonable and probable grounds for the search. This right is protected by s. 8 of the *Charter*. You also have the right under s. 10 (b) of the *Charter* to obtain and instruct counsel before a body search.

Vehicle searches

The police are allowed to stop you for any reason if you are driving a vehicle. The police are allowed to search your car only if:

- you consent (but you do not have to consent to a search of your car),
- you have committed a criminal offence,

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- you are arrested, or
 - they see something in your car that gives them a reasonable cause for doing a search, such as rolling papers, beer bottle caps or security tags.

Seizures

The police can take your property only if it is connected to a crime. This includes:

- money obtained by crime, property that was purchased with money obtained by crime or stolen property,
- property used in committing a crime, or
- property that could be used as evidence of a crime, such as videos.

The police can take property without a warrant if the officer was lawfully present in the place in the execution of his or her duties. They must give you a receipt with a case number for any property they seize.

Use of force in the enforcement of the law

The police can use force to enforce the law if they are acting on reasonable grounds, and if they use no more force than is necessary for that purpose. The police are not allowed to use force that is intended to cause death or grievous bodily harm, unless they believe it is necessary to prevent the death or grievous bodily harm of themselves or someone else.

The police cannot use force to detain people unless they are putting them under arrest. They are also not justified in using force generally in investigating crimes. When carrying out a search, the use of force is justifiable only as far as it is necessary to perform the search.

Police can be charged with s. 26 of the *Criminal Code* if their use of force is excessive.

Undercover officers and security guards

You could be charged with an offence if you tell people that a person is an undercover officer. Undercover officers do not have to tell you they are cops if you ask them. They are allowed to lie and break the law.

Security guards do not have the same powers as police – they have the same powers as regular citizens. They can arrest you only if they see you committing an indictable or hybrid offence, or if they see you running away from the police. You still have the right to remain silent and to a lawyer.

■ POSSIBLE OFFENCES

You, or people on the street, could be charged with the following offences.

Criminal Code Offences

Breach of the Peace

This is not actually an offence, but the police can arrest you under s. 31 of the *Criminal Code* if you are causing a disturbance and there is a potential for violence. The police must release you after arresting you.

Resisting or Obstructing an Officer

Copwatchers might be threatened with this charge (s. 129 of the *Criminal Code*), but remember that you have the right to observe the police as long as you are not attempting to interfere with the officer. This is a hybrid offence. You can be charged with resisting or obstructing an officer if you:

- resist or wilfully obstruct an officer in the execution of his or her duty (or anyone helping an officer), or
- do not assist an officer who is arresting a person if the officer asks for assistance.

Advising others not to cooperate with police has been construed by the courts as obstruction. When a police request is not legally authorized, the failure to abide by the request does not amount to obstruction. It is not obstruction to *reasonably* resist *illegal* police activities or offer opinions as to the legitimacy of police tactics or operations. A person intervening in a false arrest must make their inquiry in a manner that is not intemperate, unduly persistent, irrelevant or made in an unreasonable manner.

If the police threaten you with this charge or ask you to leave the area, ask them how far you should step back. They should allow you to observe from a reasonable distance.

Weapons

Section 90 (1) of the *Criminal Code* makes it an offence to carry concealed weapons, unless you have a permit under the *Firearms Act*. A weapon is anything that is used or is intended to be used to cause death or injury, or to threaten or intimidate someone.

Intoxication

Section 175 (1)(ii) of the *Criminal Code* says that anyone who is drunk and causes a disturbance in a public place is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

Also, s. 40 (1) of the British Columbia *Liquor Control and Licensing Act* prohibits consumption of liquor in a public place unless there is a licence. Section 41 (1) makes it illegal to be intoxicated in a public place. Under s. 41 (2), a peace officer can arrest you without a warrant for being intoxicated in a public place. Section 70 (1) allows an officer to seize and dispose of liquor held in contravention of this act.

The *Offence Act* s. 91 (1) allows the police to arrest you for public intoxication, if you are so drunk or high that you are dangerous to yourself or others, or are causing a disturbance. You must be released once you have sobered up, or if a sober adult asks that you be released into his or her care.

Mischief

This offence includes destroying or damaging property, or interfering with its lawful use (s. 430 (1) of the *Criminal Code*). Mischief is a hybrid offence.

Assault

Assault includes direct and indirect (throwing something) force against another person, and can be very minor (s. 266 of the *Criminal Code*). It is a hybrid offence. Other assault offences under the *Criminal Code* are: assault with a weapon (s. 267), which is a hybrid offence; aggravated assault (s. 268), which is an indictable offence; and assaulting a police officer (s. 270), which is a hybrid offence.

Causing a disturbance, indecent exhibition, loitering, etc.

This offence includes a number of prohibited acts, including fighting, screaming, shouting, swearing, singing or using insulting language, impeding or molesting another person, or loitering in a public place and obstructing people (s. 175 (1) of the *Criminal Code*). This is a summary offence.

Vancouver Bylaws

Street and Traffic By-Law No. 2849

If you violate any provision of this bylaw, you are deemed to be guilty and are liable to a penalty. In other words, it is enough that you did the act – there is no mental element required. The penalty for offences under this bylaw is a fine of no more than \$2,000.

Jaywalking

Jaywalking on city streets is illegal (s. 12 (2)). The police are authorized to arrest people for jaywalking if they do not stop and give their names, addresses and birth dates, if asked (s. 16 (2)). This bylaw is often used against sex trade workers.

Hitchhiking

Standing in a roadway to solicit a ride (other than from public transit) is illegal (s. 15). The police can arrest you without a warrant if you do not provide your name, address and birth date, if asked (s. 16 (2)).

Bike riding

It is illegal to ride a bike on the sidewalk, unless it is posted that it is permitted (s. 60). You cannot wear headphones (s. 60A). Bicycles must have a bell (s. 60B), and riders must wear helmets (s. 60D). The police can arrest you without a warrant if you do not provide your name, address and birth date, if asked (s. 60F).

Busking and selling merchandise

Permits are required to sell merchandise on the street or sidewalk (s. 66 (1)) and to provide entertainment on the street, except in designated areas (ss. 67 (2) and (3)).

Obstructing traffic

You are not allowed to be part of a group on a street that obstructs pedestrians or vehicles, except by permission of the city (s. 69). You are also not allowed to loiter on a street in a way that obstructs, impedes or interferes with traffic (s. 70).

Panhandling

Panhandling is not illegal in itself, but you cannot solicit in a way that causes an obstruction (s. 70A (2)). Also, it is illegal to:

- sit or lie on a street in a manner that obstructs or impedes pedestrians, in the course of asking for money (s. 70A (1)(a)),
- continue to ask for money or harass a pedestrian after the person has made a negative response or has otherwise indicated a refusal (s. 70A (b)),

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- physically approach a pedestrian if you are in a group of three or more people (s. 70A (c)),
 - solicit on a street within 10 metres of a bank, credit union or trust company entrance, or an ATM (s. 70A (d)), or
 - solicit from people in cars in a way that obstructs or impedes traffic (s. 70A (e)).

In this section, solicitation does not include soliciting for charity.

Skateboarding

Skateboarding is permitted only in designated areas (s. 77 (1)). Police can seize and detain a skateboard that is used in contravention of a bylaw and charge \$45 for its return (ss. (2) and (3)).

Littering

It is illegal to deposit paper, handbills, refuse or other things on the street (s. 84).

Distributing fliers

It is illegal to distribute advertising matter to people on the street if it is likely to be thrown on the street (s. 84A). It is also illegal to put fliers on cars without the driver's permission (s. 85).

Postering

It is illegal to paint, paste or affix anything on street poles or other "furniture," or deface or disfigure poles or street furniture, unless authorized by the City, bylaw or legislation (ss. 85A (a) (b) (c) and (d)). Areas specifically authorized by the City for public notices are exempt (s. 85A (e)).

Parks Control By-Law

If you violate any section of this bylaw, you are deemed guilty of the offence and are liable to a penalty. The penalty for a violation of this bylaw is a fine of no more than \$2,000 and not less than \$50, or to imprisonment for no longer than 2 months.

Being in parks

The City can forbid people from crossing over areas of parks (s. 3 (a)), and can post hours when people are not allowed in parks (s. 3 (b)).

Vandalism in parks

It is an offence to destroy or damage anything in a park, including plants, trees, buildings, benches, ponds and official notices (s. 2).

Selling goods or services in parks

It is illegal to sell goods or services in parks, unless you have a permit or licence (s. 4 (a)(i) and (ii)).

Making fires in parks

It is illegal to make fires or add fuel to fires in parks (ss. 5 and 14 (j)).

Smoking in parks

It is an offence to drop a lit match, cigarette, cigar or other burning material in a park.

Skateboarding in parks

Skateboarding is permitted only in designated areas of parks (s. 7).

Gatherings in parks

City permission is required for any march, performance, concert, gathering or meeting in any park. Public addresses, demonstrations and use of amplifiers or speakers are prohibited except by permit (s. 8).

Disorderly conduct, loitering and squatting in parks

People can be removed from parks, or charged with an offence under the bylaw, for disorderly conduct, loitering, or for staying in a park overnight. You can also be removed and/or charged if you disobey a park manager or police officer, or violate any other rule or bylaw in the park (s. 10). It is an offence to put up a tent or other shelter without permission (s. 11).

Posting and handing out fliers in parks

It is illegal to put up posters or hand out fliers in parks without City permission (s. 14 (d)).

Bike riding in parks

Bike riding is not permitted except on designated paths. Provisions of the *Street and Traffic By-law* regarding bikes also apply in parks (s. 14 (h)).

Littering and breaking glass in parks

All litter in parks must be deposited in litter containers provided by the City. If there are no containers, litter must be removed by the person responsible for it (ss. 14A, 14B and 14C). Breaking glass in a park or beach without City permission is an offence (s. 14 (i)).

Animal Control By-Law No. 7528

Dog owners are not allowed to let dogs run at large (s. 4.1), or be in public without a leash (s. 4.2). The fine for these offences is at least \$100. Vicious dogs must be muzzled while away from home (s. 4.4). The fine for failing to muzzle a vicious dog is at least \$200. Female dogs must be confined while in heat (s. 4.7). You cannot own more than 3 dogs at once (s. 4.8). Dogs owned for more than 3 months must be licensed (s. 5.1) and wear a collar (s. 5.4). Fines for these offences are at least \$25 and not more than \$2,000. Owners must remove dog excrement in places other than land owned by the dog owner (s. 6.1), or face a fine of \$50 to \$500.

Business Prohibition By-Law No. 5156

Under this bylaw, it is an offence to carry on a business, trade or profession involving “nude encounters.” This includes any discussion about fees for such activities. The penalty is a fine of not more than \$2,000.

Graffiti By-Law No. 7343

Under this bylaw, it is an offence to place graffiti on any wall, fence or anywhere else in any street or public place (s. 3), or on property near a street or public place (s. 4). Property owners or occupants are not allowed to permit graffiti to be placed on property near a street or public place (s. 5), and must maintain the property to be free of graffiti (s. 6). Anyone who violates this bylaw is deemed to be guilty and liable to penalty. The penalty for a violation of this bylaw is a fine of not less than \$100 and not more than \$2,000.

■ TACTICS

Intimidation through accountability

The main objective of Copwatch is to discourage police brutality and harassment by letting the police know that their actions are being recorded and that they will be held accountable for their acts of harassment and abuse. To this end we will:

- Record incidents of abuse and harassment
- Provide individuals with information about their rights and Pivot's Affidavit Program
- Publicise incidents of abuse and harassment
- Educate those who do not believe that police harassment exists

Defuse the situation

People do not want to be arrested. As Copwatchers, we do not want to escalate a situation to where police arrest someone as a way of getting back at us. We want the police to treat people with respect and to observe their rights.

Often, the police forget that homeless people and others actually have rights. We may need to remind them from time to time. We must learn how to assert our rights and to encourage others to assert their rights without endangering someone who is already in trouble.

We do not attempt to interfere with officers as they make routine arrests. We document and try to inform the police when we feel that they are violating the law. Attempting to stop someone from being arrested often has serious consequences for the person being detained, as well as for the reputation of Copwatch as being a non-violent organisation.

In a physical encounter with officers, we must realise that the police have weapons, prisons, courts and judges to back them up. In addition, we do not want people to be nervous when they see Copwatch coming to help them. We want to keep people from going to jail in the first place and not send them to jail with more serious charges.

Empower the community

As people on the streets serving the public, we are not only concerned with the police. We are concerned about the people. Our effectiveness as Copwatchers will be greatly enhanced if the community trusts us. During our shifts, we must try to get to know the people who hang out on the street. For this reason we will try to schedule people who know the area with those who are newer to the scene. Building relationships is crucial. We can listen to people and help when it is possible. This

aspect of Copwatch depends on the willingness of the members to get to know and appreciate the street community.

When the streets are quiet and there is no police activity, a Copwatcher can spend time distributing Rights Cards, affidavit pamphlets or just getting to know people. Introduce yourself. Explain to people that you are with Copwatch and that you want to hear their stories. If people know that you are trying to help and that you care, that can be empowering.

Depending on how familiar and/or comfortable you are, you can assist people with problems that arise. We want our community to solve problems wherever possible without police intervention. If you can help folks resolve a conflict, communicate and understand each other, you are doing a good job. It is crucial that we move our communities away from the idea that we are totally dependent upon police for justice and safety.

SHIFT PROCEDURES

Begin shift

- Be sure you do not have any outstanding warrants, and that your bike or car use conforms to all laws. Make sure that you are not carrying anything illegal. Do not give the police any opportunity to bust you.
- Identification can be helpful if the police detain you.
- Only Copwatch in groups, for safety and effectiveness. It is important not to confront the police alone. You might need a witness who can verify your story in case of a problem.
- Organise to meet your group at a mutually agreeable time and location.
- Wear identification (Copwatch identification band).
- Be sure that you or someone in your group brings things you will need to Copwatch:
 1. Notebook and pen
 2. Incident forms
 3. Copwatch Handbook
 4. Copwatch fliers, Rights Cards and Affidavit Program fliers to distribute
 5. Tape recorder, video recorder, camera
 6. *Criminal Code*

During shift

Shifts last for approximately 3 hours. Please be on time for your shift. If you are unable to work your shift please call your shift coordinator.

Try to be on the street for as much of your shift as possible (do not spend an hour in a coffee shop). Be where people can see and talk to you. After each incident, take time to fully fill out the incident report.

As you observe a situation, one person records what officers are saying or doing, while another gets information from witnesses. Consult and share information. Get a firm grasp of the situation first. Record as much information as possible. Witness names and numbers are important. Also write down the name and/or badge number of the officers. The *Police (Uniforms) Regulations* of the BC *Police Act* requires all uniform officers to wear an identification number or name above their right breast pocket of their uniform. (Executive and senior officers, and undercover police, are not required to wear identification.) It also helps to write down when and where the incident happened. If there has been an injury, encourage the person to see a doctor and take pictures of the injuries as soon as possible.

Remember that you have the right to watch the police. You do not have the right to interfere. (See information about the offence of obstructing police above.) If officers want to send you a message, they will arrest you. Even if they do not press charges, you will still have to go through the unpleasant experience of being arrested.

When you observe police, remember that you do not want to make officers more nervous than they already are. Keep your hands visible at all times. Do not approach an officer from behind or stand behind them. Do not make any sudden movements or raise your voice to the police. Try to keep the situation calm. You do not want to get the person in more trouble. If an officer tells you to step back, tell the officer that you do not want to interfere, you simply wish to observe.

More Assertive Style:

- Identify yourself as 'Copwatch.'
- Ask victims if they know why they are being arrested or detained.
- Get the badge number. Ask the officer if you cannot see it.
- If the stop is vague, ask the officer to name the *Criminal Code* section that they are enforcing.
- Have educational conversations with people standing around.
- Do not piss the officer off if you can help it. Do not let it get personal.
- Negotiate the situation.
- If possible, get a Rights Card to the victim.

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- If the person wants to take action, give them an Affidavit Program flier and refer them to Pivot.
 - Try to stay until the stop is concluded. Remember that Rodney King was originally just a traffic stop.

Principles of non-violence:

- Be polite to everyone you meet, including the police.
- Do not insult or incite the police. This is counterproductive.
- Do not carry anything illegal or give the police an opportunity to bust you for non-Copwatch activity. Of course no weapons, knives, drugs, etc. should be brought on a Copwatch.
- Do not Copwatch if you have had alcohol.
- Do not yell. Speak in a calm, audible voice.
- Avoid quick or sudden movements when you are around the police.
- Do not run to a scene. Walk. Remain visible to the officer at all times.
- Keep your hands visible at all times.
- Do not use flash cameras or video lighting when officers are engaging in a routine stop.
- If a stop escalates into unnecessary use of force, use what tools you have to record and document the situation.
- Do not assume who is right and who is wrong. Observe and document before taking action.
- Try to be helpful to the person being stopped without making his/her situation worse. Our goal is to lessen the incidents of harassment and violence, not escalate them.

Things to be aware of:

- Do not inadvertently collaborate in a crime (do not become a look-out, warning if police are coming, etc.).
- Do not let people use the Copwatch name to shield illegal activity.
- You may get arrested at times, but if you are doing good Copwatching, the organisation will support you.
- Talking to the police is a bad idea. It can undermine your credibility with the community and give the police information about you and the group.
- Do not record a detainee if they do not want you to. Respect them. Tell them that you are working to stop police misconduct. If this does not satisfy them, turn off the camera. Remember that you are representing Copwatch with every act and every word. Those that come after you will have an easier time if you do your job well.

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- Do not make promises that Copwatch cannot keep. Do not tell people that we will get them a lawyer, take the police to court, etc. Tell people that we will work with them to get justice. Invite them to a meeting.
 - Do not be afraid to say "I don't know" if you are asked legal questions. This is better than giving out wrong information.

End shift

Return completed incident reports to the office. Be sure that they are legible and that you put your name on it in case follow-up is needed. Check the weekly Copwatch shift log and sign it. Return any equipment to the office for the next Copwatchers to use. Please check the equipment and note if anything is wrong with it.

WATCHING POLICE

Officers stop someone

- Write down officer names, badge numbers and car license number.
- Write down the time, place and date of the incident.
- Determine if the person is being arrested, and if so, on what charge.
- Get the names and contact information of witnesses to the arrest or harassment.
- Try to get the name of the person being arrested, but do not ask their name unless they have already given it to the police.
- If necessary or possible, photograph and/or record the incident on tape.
- Fill out incident form completely.

Police violence

- Same as above.
- Attempt to gather witnesses to the incident by explaining to bystanders what is happening.
- Encourage the police to be calm and non-violent.
- Call 911 so that the incident will be recorded at the police communication centre.

In case of arrest

If you are arrested, the police must tell you why you are being arrested. You have the right to remain silent. In fact, it is probably a good idea not to talk to the officer. Be sure to get the badge number of the officer who is arresting you.

The police must tell you that you have the right to a lawyer, and tell you about Legal Aid and your right to free legal advice. They must give you the opportunity to speak to a lawyer, in private, as soon as possible. The police are allowed to search you if you are arrested. If the police want to strip search you, ask to speak to a lawyer right away. You should not have to disrobe in front of someone of the opposite sex or in a public place.

If someone else is arrested, ask the officer where he or she is being taken.

VIDEO FILMING

Video is a powerful tool for documenting police abuses. It is important to think about what you are taping. Here are some points to keep in mind when filming:

- Do not film people who obviously do not want to be filmed – ask permission.
- Do not film criminal conduct if you see any. Focus on the police.
- Try not to record yourself getting into arguments with the police. Good footage of an event with a hostile commentary from the videographer is not as useful. Try to let the situation speak for itself. Let the other group members do the talking if it is necessary.
- Keep the strap around your neck when you are filming for safety's sake.
- When you are done using the camera, take the battery out so that it does not run down.
- Be sure to press the button that gives the date and time on the screen.
- Do not let the sun shine directly into the lens. Do not put the camera at undue risk of being confiscated. Back off if necessary.

When Copwatching, bring an envelope, addressed to a member of the group, with enough postage to cover the cost of mailing film. If you are afraid the police are going to confiscate your film, someone in your group can take the film and drop it in a mail box.

The information contained in this manual is not intended to serve as legal advice. The laws are always changing.

Copwatch Vancouver works in conjunction with the Pivot Legal Society and the Collective Opposed to Police Brutality (COP-B).

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