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[Photo Caption: A Columbia County Jail deputy with Taser Axon body camera. The Columbia County Sheriff's Office is issuing body cameras to all full-time deputies employed in the jail and on patrol to "undergird accountability," protect against false accusations of misconduct and provide independent evidence in criminal and civil court cases obtained directly from the deputy's point of view."](#)

In an effort to undergird accountability and protect against unfounded misconduct allegations, the Columbia County Sheriff's Office is moving to on-officer body cameras for deputies working both in the jail and on patrol.

The transition in the jail has already begun, and in the coming weeks, it is expected that deputies on patrol will also have issued "body cams" designed to more fully document official contacts between deputies and the public (and between deputies and suspects or inmates).

"The move to on-officer body cameras is critical to my commitment to transparency with the public," said Sheriff Jeff Dickerson. "Deputies are given tremendous responsibility under my authority, and I want them to have the confidence that there is an independent record of their activities that will protect them from false allegations of misconduct--and also hold them accountable to the high standards expected of them."

Deputies are undergoing training and policy updating for the purpose of designing consistent use of the "body cams." It is expected that all official contacts will be recorded and kept in storage for the appropriate length of time, according to state public records laws. The cameras will also be used to document events to which deputies respond and provide evidence in criminal and civil court cases.

The sheriff believes that on-officer cameras are a substantial improvement over dashboard and other mounted devices that do not adequately capture the officer's point of view. "These cameras stay with the deputy no matter where he or she is deployed," Dickerson said. "When it comes to documenting use of force cases, for example, these cameras afford a better chance of documenting more closely the conditions deputies face at the moment force is used, or the moment the decision to arrest is made. Our deputies make good decisions, I believe the use of these 'body cams' will document these decisions in decisive ways that will help underscore the good work they do."