

Security Camera Policy

The Amherst Public Library uses video security cameras to ensure the physical security of staff, patrons and the Library facility.

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the placement and use of video security cameras, as well as the access and retrieval of recorded digital video images at the Amherst Public Libraries (APL), which are the Main Library at Audubon, Clearfield, Eggertsville-Snyder and Williamsville branches.

Security Camera Locations & Privacy

Reasonable efforts are made to safeguard the privacy of library patrons and employees. APL protects each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted. The video security cameras are positioned to record only those areas specified by the APL Director, and will complement other measures to maintain a safe and secure environment in compliance with Library policies. Camera locations shall not be changed or added without permission of the APL Director or Board of Trustees.

Cameras may be installed in common areas of the Library such as near book and media collections, public seating, and entrances/exits. Cameras will not be installed in areas where staff and public have a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as restrooms or private offices; nor are they positioned to identify a person's reading or viewing activities in the library. The cameras capture images only, not audio. Camera views do not include the parking lot.

Library staff may have access to live footage and no recordings are saved via the monitors utilized for live viewing. Only the APL Director, or their authorized designee in their absence, has access to the administrative settings. Live footage is viewed when Library staff cannot actively monitor the area(s) being recorded.

Because security cameras are not constantly monitored, staff and public should take appropriate precautions for their safety and for the security of personal property. The APL is not responsible for loss of property or personal injury.

Use/Disclosure of Video Records

Video records and still photographs may be used by authorized APL individuals to identify those responsible for library policy violations, criminal activity on library property, assessment of security risks, or actions considered disruptive to normal library operations. Law enforcement review may also be requested by the APL Director.

Any APL staff member who becomes aware of any unauthorized disclosure of a video recording and/or a potential privacy breach has a responsibility to immediately inform their Supervisor, who will immediately contact the APL Director or their designee if the Director is unavailable.

Requesting Access to Security Camera Footage

APL staff are required to refer any law enforcement request for security camera footage or still photographs to the APL Library Director. APL does not make security camera footage or still photographs available to any agency unless a subpoena, warrant, or court order is issued pursuant to law. Upon receipt by the APL Director, it will be determined if the document is in proper form. If not, APL shall insist any defect be remedied before releasing records that contain patron information.

However, exigent circumstances to ensure staff and patron safety is the first priority in any threatening situation. Such requests must be submitted for review to the APL Director, or their authorized designee in their absence, in writing from law enforcement for a specified time period, location, and incident.

Confidentiality/privacy issues prohibit the general public from viewing security camera footage.

Members of the public are strongly advised to contact law enforcement and/or legal counsel before requesting records related to potential criminal activity.

Retention of Digital Images

APL avoids creating unnecessary records and retaining records not needed for the fulfillment of the mission of the APL. Recordings will not be retained for an extended period or archived for longer than 30 days (though this time frame may be shorter due to digital storage limitations), unless required as part of an ongoing investigation or litigation. Should desired footage no longer be available or is inaccessible, individuals may not claim of the APL any liability or responsibility for such footage loss.

Adopted by the Amherst Public Library Board of Trustees at a public meeting held on March 5, 2025.