



*JOHN BEL EDWARDS*  
GOVERNOR

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DEPUTY SECRETARY

**State of Louisiana**  
*Department of Public Safety and Corrections*  
*Public Safety Services*

FEBRUARY 25, 2022  
4750/0501/MMG/22-23843  
HQ-01-631

TFC BENJAMIN COVELL  
TROOP B

IA#21-063; OLA#075629  
VIA PERSONAL DELIVERY

RE: 24 HOUR SUSPENSION

TFC Covell:

In accordance with State Police Commission Rules 12.1, 12.2, you are hereby suspended from duty without pay and allowances for 24 hours. Your suspension will begin at 0600 hours on April 6, 2022, and will end at 1800 hours on April 7, 2022. You shall report back to your assigned duty station at 1800 hours on April 11, 2022. You are suspended for the following reasons:

Troop B investigated a serious injury crash that occurred on October 24, 2021, that ultimately resulted in a fatality. On October 25, 2021, Senior Trooper Robert Goertz was advised by the wife of the arrested driver, Wendell Lachney, that Lachney had been involved in a previous crash on September 4, 2021, and he may have been drinking the night of that crash. She advised that a trooper brought Lachney home following the crash on September 4, 2021<sup>1</sup>. S/T Goertz advised Lt. Kevin Curlee of this information. Lt. Curlee determined that you investigated the crash on September 4, 2021, and documented your investigation in report number 20210034747. The report shows that the crash was minor and you did not suspect alcohol or drug usage, but Lachney's vehicle was parked and locked, which raised questions for Lt. Curlee.

During the night shift on October 25, 2021, Lt. Curlee accessed Evidence.com and searched for any videos relating to your investigation of the September 4, 2021, crash. Lt. Curlee found that there were no videos uploaded to Evidence.com by you since July 28, 2021. You were instructed to report to Troop B to discuss the crash investigation. Upon your arrival, you were told to dock your camera and upload the videos on your BWC. Upon completion of the upload, it was determined that there were 47 videos that you had not uploaded from your BWCs and logged into Evidence.com from the time period of July 28, 2021 to October 24, 2021. Lt. Curlee did not locate any BWC recordings associated with your crash investigation on September 4, 2021. Furthermore, a review of the audit logs for all BWCs you possessed on September 4, 2021, showed that none of

<sup>1</sup> There was no evidence to indicate that you had reason to suspect on September 4, 2021, that Lachney was impaired. Furthermore, Lachney's wife was not in town on September 4, 2021, to observe him.

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them were even powered on during your tour-of-duty on September 4, 2021. You were instructed to complete a written incident report. A copy of your report you submitted to Sgt. Monty Montelongo is labeled as Exhibit "A" and is attached hereto and made a part hereof.

An administrative investigation was conducted by Internal Affairs investigators Trooper Richard Buckland and Trooper Kevin Ducote. On December 16, 2021, you participated in an interview with Troopers Buckland and Ducote, you advised them that due to a crash involving your regularly assigned unit, you operated a pool unit from July 2021 until November 2021. The pool unit was not equipped with an In-Car Camera (ICC) system. You were accustomed to your BWC being triggered to record when you activated the emergency lights in your regularly assigned unit. Because there was no system in the pool unit to automatically activate your BWC to record when the lights were activated, you had to manually activate your BWC to record by pressing the event button. You advised Troopers Buckland and Ducote that you believe that you were wearing your BWC and did not intentionally fail to record your crash investigation on September 4, 2021. You further advised that you were accustomed to instantly uploading and categorizing your videos in your unit via the bluetooth sync system, and just failed to manually do so when you were using the pool unit. You advised that you docked your BWC in the docking station at your house to charge it, but did not connect it to your internet to also upload your videos while the camera was charging. Trooper Buckland's review of your activity in Mark 43 showed that from July 28, 2021 to October 24, 2021, you generated two arrest reports and 45 citations that would have associated videos that you had not uploaded into Evidence.com until October 25, 2021.

As evidenced by the device audit trails for your issued BWCs, you did not have a BWC powered on and ready to record on September 4, 2021, when you conducted the above referenced two vehicle crash investigation during your tour-of-duty, in violation of Louisiana State Police Policy and Procedure Order No. 1117 – Body Worn Camera and In-Car Camera Systems, 5 - Activation, and 6 – Responsibilities, which state in pertinent part:

5. Activation

...

- iii) Officers equipped with the BWC shall ensure their BWC is powered on, ready to record or receive a signal to record, during any tour of duty which requires the use of the BWC in accordance with this policy, when the officer is subject to call.

6. Responsibilities

i) BWC /In-Car Camera Systems Operator

- a) The BWC / in-car camera systems operator shall:

...

- 11) Ensure that his/her in-car camera system is always powered on and ensure that his/her BWC is powered on when they are in-service and subject to call.

As evidenced by the device audit trails for your issued BWCs, you failed to upload 47 BWC videos at the end of each shift from July 28, 2021 to October 24, 2021, in violation of Louisiana State Police Policy and Procedure Order No. 1117 – Body Worn Camera and In-Car Camera Systems, 6 – Responsibilities, which states in pertinent part:

6. Responsibilities

- i) BWC / In-Car Camera Systems Operator
  - a) The BWC / in-car camera systems operator shall:

...

- 10) Ensure that all BWC and in-car cameras system recordings are uploaded into cloud storage at the end of each shift and as per the manufacturer's specifications.

Any future violations of this or any nature may result in more severe discipline, up to and including termination.

You have the right to appeal this action to the Louisiana State Police Commission. The time limits and procedure for appealing are contained in Chapter 13 of the State Police Commission Rules. A copy of Chapter 13 can be obtained from the State Police Commission. Their current mailing address is P.O. Box 66555, Baton Rouge, LA 70896-6555. Their current telephone number is (225) 925-7057 and their fax number is (225) 925-7058.

Your attention is directed to Louisiana State Police Policy and Procedure Order No. 201.5.iv, which states:

- iv) No officer shall work escorts, paid off-duty details, or overtime in any pay period wherein he has taken leave without pay, been suspended without pay, placed on forced or administrative leave, or worked at a reduction in pay as a result of a disciplinary action unless authorized by the appointing authority.

Sincerely,



Colonel Lamar Davis  
Superintendent, Louisiana State Police

- c: Lt. Col. M. Doug Cain, II  
Lt. Col. Chavez Cammon  
Major John Riles  
Captain Donovan Archote  
Internal Affairs  
Office of Legal Affairs  
Human Resources Management

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## Department of Public Safety & Corrections Incident Report

Nature of Report: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial Report by Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Action Taken by Supervisor		Incident:    Time: 0100 hours Date: 10/27/2021	
To: Sergeant Monty Montelongo    Troop B		From: TFC. Benjamin Covell    Troop B	
Rank/Title	Troop/Section	Rank/Title	Troop/Section
Nature of Incident: BWC Camera Activation and Categorization			
Location: 2101 I-10 Service Road Kenner, LA. 70065			

### Synopsis of Incident

I, Trooper First Class Benjamin Covell, was involved in a fleet crash on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Due to the fleet crash, I have been utilizing pool unit B-203 from the motor pool at Troop B. Prior to my fleet crash, I would upload and categorize my Body Worn Camera videos instantly using the provided bluetooth sync system which is installed in my primary unit. Since using the pool unit, I inadvertently forgot that it did not have a bluetooth system installed, and that I would have to manually dock the BWC and log in to evidence.com to categorize and tag each individual video. As a result, I learned on the above listed date that I had 47 uncategorized videos on my primary BWC. I was also made aware that I did not properly activate my BWC for a particular crash that occurred on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, during the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. At that particular time, I had used my BWC sparsely due to the nature of the shift assignments (clearing roadways of debris, blocking flooded roadways and assisting Sheriff's Office personnel with road blocks). I believe the irregularity of responding to vehicle crashes at this time and the personal stressors of the aftermath of the storm may have contributed to my not remembering to activate the BWC on the scene of the crash. As of this date, I have uploaded and categorized all of my BWC videos via evidence.com. Ultimately, I understand that it is my responsibility to upload and categorize my BWC evidence in a timely manner and to ensure that my BWC is properly activated when required to do so. I have since reviewed and discussed the LSP policy with my immediate supervisors to ensure that this issue does not occur in the future.



Reporting Employee Signature	Data/Personnel No.	Date
	2644 / P00293404	10/27/21