

WA Surveillance Watch Template

SURVEILLANCE CAMERA PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

One-Page Quick Start Guide for Washington State

🎯 **YOUR MISSION: Get transparency on surveillance cameras in your community**

⚡ 5-MINUTE SETUP

1. IDENTIFY YOUR AGENCY - Live in Olympia? → Olympia Police Department - Live in Lacey? → Lacey Police Department
- Live in Tumwater? → Tumwater Police Department - Live in unincorporated area? → County Sheriff's Office - Not sure? Call city hall and ask: "Who provides police services here?"

2. FIND THEIR PUBLIC RECORDS EMAIL - Olympia PD: publicrecords@olympiawa.gov - Lacey PD: publicrecords@cityoflacey.org - Tumwater PD: publicrecords@ci.tumwater.wa.us - Thurston County Sheriff: publicrecords@co.thurston.wa.us - Other agencies: Search "[City] Police public records" online

3. CHOOSE YOUR TEMPLATE - **Simplified** (recommended for beginners): 2 pages, key info - **Comprehensive** (for detailed investigation): 6 pages, everything

📄 **FILL IN THE BLANKS (10 minutes)**

Open the template and replace every [BRACKETED ITEM]:

****Date:**** [Today's date]
****To:**** [Agency Name] - Public Records Officer
****Email:**** [Agency's public records email]
****From:**** [Your Name] | [Your Email] | [Your Phone]

Replace [DEPARTMENT NAME] everywhere (use Find & Replace): - Example: "Olympia Police Department"

Add camera locations (or "all locations"):

****Camera Locations:****
- 4th Ave & Capitol Way, Olympia
- All other surveillance cameras operated by your department

Set date range:

****Time Period:**** All records from program inception to present

OR

****Time Period:**** January 1, 2024 to present

SUBMIT (2 minutes)

Email Method (Recommended):

1. **To:** [Agency's public records email]
2. **Subject:** Public Records Request - Surveillance Cameras
3. **Body:**

Dear Public Records Officer,

Attached is my public records request regarding surveillance camera systems operated by [Department Name].

Please confirm receipt within five business days as required by RCW 42.56.520.

I prefer electronic delivery.

Thank you,
[Your Name]
[Your Email]
[Your Phone]

4. **Attach:** Your completed template as PDF
 5. **Send** and save confirmation
 6. **Note** the date/time sent
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WHAT TO EXPECT

Day 0: You submit request

Day 1-5: Agency **MUST** respond with one of: - ✓ Provide records - ✓ Give time/cost estimate
- ✓ Deny (must cite specific exemption)

Day 6: No response? Send follow-up **Day 10:** Still nothing? Escalate to department head **Day 15:** Consider formal complaint

IF DENIED FOR "PRIVACY"

Use this response:

I am appealing this denial. In November 2024, Skagit County Superior Court ruled in Rodriguez v. City of Sedro Woolley that surveillance camera data **MUST** be released under RCW 42.56. The judge specifically rejected privacy arguments, finding the surveillance is "so broad and indiscriminate" that the data must be disclosed.

Please reverse the denial and provide the records within 10 business days.

HELP & RESOURCES

If you encounter problems:

- **ACLU of Washington:** (206) 624-2184 | aclu-wa.org
 - **AG Open Government:** (360) 753-6200 | opengovernment@atg.wa.gov
 - **Full How-To Guide:** [Reference full guide for detailed help]
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💡 PRO TIPS

✓ **Do:** - Use email (creates paper trail) - Request electronic format (usually free) - Be polite but firm - Document everything - Follow up promptly - Request network audit logs (shows who accessed data) - Ask about federal agency access

✗ **Don't:** - Mention your own vehicle - Explain why you want the info - Be confrontational - Give up after first denial - Ignore the 5-day response requirement

🔍 WHAT TO REQUEST

The templates already cover these, but key items:

1. **Camera Locations** - Where are they?
 2. **Contracts** - Who are vendors? What did it cost?
 3. **Policies** - How is data used and shared?
 4. **Audit Logs** - Who searched the data and why?
 5. **Federal Access** - Did ICE/Border Patrol access data?
 6. **Data Retention** - How long is data kept?
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📋 CHECKLIST

Before Submitting: ☐ Template completed (no [BRACKETS] remain)

- ☐ Correct agency name and email
- ☐ Your contact info accurate
- ☐ Saved as PDF
- ☐ Draft email written

After Submitting: ☐ Confirmation saved

- ☐ Submission date noted
 - ☐ 5-day reminder set
 - ☐ Folder created to track correspondence
-

⚖️ YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

Recent Court Win: November 2024 ruling confirmed surveillance camera data is public record under RCW 42.56

5-Day Response: Agencies must respond within 5 business days (RCW 42.56.520)

No Retaliation: Filing requests is protected constitutional activity

Free or Low Cost: Electronic records are usually free or minimal cost

🏠 KEY FINDING: FEDERAL ACCESS

A University of Washington report (October 2024) found: - **8+ WA agencies** directly shared data with Border Patrol - **10+ WA agencies** had unauthorized “back door” federal access - Auburn & Lakewood were **unaware** and revoked access - Data used to track abortion seekers and immigrants

That’s why network audit logs are crucial!

YOU’VE GOT THIS!

Thousands of regular people file public records requests. You don’t need special training - just follow this guide.

Your request helps: - Ensure lawful surveillance use - Protect vulnerable communities
- Bring transparency to your city - Exercise democratic rights

Ready? Go file your request!

THURSTON COUNTY QUICK CONTACTS

Agency	Email
Olympia PD	publicrecords@olympiawa.gov
Lacey PD	publicrecords@cityoflacey.org
Tumwater PD	publicrecords@ci.tumwater.wa.us
Thurston County SO	publicrecords@co.thurston.wa.us

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEMPLATE

If no response after 5 days, send this:

Subject: FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED - Public Records Request [Date]

I submitted a request on [Date]. RCW 42.56.520 requires response within 5 business days. I have received no response.

Please respond immediately with the statutorily required response.

[Your Name]

[Email]

[Phone]

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Know your rights | Demand transparency | Protect your community

Questions? See full How-To Guide for detailed instructions