
Thermal Imaging Devices

433.1 PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for the use of department owned thermal imaging equipment.

433.2 DEFINITION

Thermal imaging devices are a passive and non-intrusive tool designed to detect relative differences in surface temperatures. They are intended to assist public safety personnel in their everyday activities, criminal investigations and in fire operations.

433.3 LAW ENFORCEMENT APPLICATIONS

Public Safety currently has several thermal imaging cameras for use in law enforcement investigations. There are eleven court-recognized applications of thermal imaging equipment in law enforcement. These applications are broken down into general and specialized surveillance.

- a. General Surveillance: Specific facts or corroborated information are not requirements for the use of the thermal imaging device in the following applications:
 1. Search and rescue
 2. Fugitive searches
 3. Vehicle pursuits
 4. Flight safety
 5. Marine and ground surveillance
 6. Perimeter surveillance
 7. Officer safety
- b. Specialized Surveillance: To be conducted only when supported by specific, corroborating items or events of probable cause. The thermal imaging device shall not be used for broad based searches (i.e.; observing every house or vehicle on a street).
 1. Structure profiles (indoor marijuana grows)
 2. Disturbed surface scenario (hidden compartments/buried evidence)
 3. Environmental law enforcement (hazardous material spills)
 4. Vehicle profiles (hidden compartments)

A search warrant shall be obtained prior to using a thermal imaging device during surveillance of a structure to corroborate an investigation. When the thermal imaging device is used as a tool in an investigation, a copy of the report shall be forwarded to the Captain of Operations. Only individuals certified by the Law Enforcement Thermographers Association shall use the thermal imager during specialized surveillance investigations. Certified thermographers shall be re-certified every two years.

Thermal Imaging Devices

433.4 FIRE FIGHTING APPLICATIONS

Public Safety thermal imaging cameras stored on fire apparatus are intended to be used for, but not limited to smoke investigations, initial size-up, search and rescue, ventilation, overhaul, and rapid intervention teams.

- a. Fire thermal cameras shall be kept in their supplied charging cradle with the neck strap attached and in the heated area of the apparatus. The spare battery shall be kept in the vehicle-mounted charger/conditioner.
- b. Fire thermal cameras shall be checked as part of the daily apparatus equipment check, to include:
 1. Turning the unit on to ensure full battery charge.
 2. Ensure the spare battery is in the charger.
 3. Inspect the camera for damage.
- c. During Monday apparatus equipment inspections, the batteries within the fire thermal cameras shall be rotated with the battery in the charger.
- d. If the fire thermal camera is used at an incident it should be thoroughly cleaned with a damp cloth, dish soap and water, and the neck strap dried before it is returned to the case. Use care to not scratch the lens.
- e. Fire thermal cameras shall not be removed from their assigned fire apparatus for use at anything other than at a fire scene without command approval.