



Blanchester Police Department

Robert J. Houghton
Chief of Police

"The mission of the Blanchester Police Department is to be the Guardians of life, property, and the Constitutional Rights of all of our neighbors to ensure a safe and secure community"

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT FOR PUBLIC RECORDS

Openness leads to a better-informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the mission and intent of The Blanchester Police Department to at all times fully comply with and abide by both the spirit and the letter of Ohio's Public Records Act. This policy was created in furtherance of the Village's mission and is meant to serve as a supplement to the Ohio Public Records Act and all applicable Ohio law.

DEFINING PUBLIC RECORDS

A "record" is defined to include the following: A document in any format – paper or electronic – that is created, received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of The Blanchester Police Department that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office.

A "public record" is a "record" that is kept by this office at the time a public records request is made, subject to applicable exemptions from disclosure under Ohio or federal law. All public records must be organized and maintained in such a way that they can be made available for inspection and copying.

MANAGING RECORDS

The Blanchester Police Department's records are subject to records retention schedules. The office's current schedules are available at 318 E. Main St. Blanchester, OH 45107, a location readily available to the public as required by Ohio Revised Code § 149.43(B)(2)

RESPONSE TIMEFRAME

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours (Monday – Friday 8:30 AM-4:00 PM) with advanced notice so such records can be located. Public records must be made available for inspection promptly. Copies of public records must be made available within a reasonable period of time. "Prompt" and "reasonable" take into account the volume of records requested, the proximity of the location where the records are stored, the necessity for any legal review and redaction, and other facts and circumstances of the records requested. It is the goal of The Blanchester Police Department that all requests for public records should be acknowledged in writing or, if feasible, satisfied within three to five business days following the office's receipt of the request.

HANDLING REQUESTS

Please wait a minimum of five (5) to seven (7) business days from the date of the report prior to requesting so that Officer has adequate time to complete the report.

No specific language is required to make a request for public records. However, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the Police Administrative Clerk to identify, retrieve, and review the records.

The requester does not have to put a records request in writing and does not have to provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested public record(s), it is requested that a phone number is left just in case there are questions regarding the request. It is this office's general policy that this information is not to be requested. However, the law does permit the office to ask for a written request, the requester's identity, and/or the intended use of the information requested, but only if (1) a written request or disclosure of the identity or intended use would benefit the requester by enhancing the office's ability to identify, locate, or deliver the public records that have been requested; and (2) the requester is first told that a written request is not required and that the requester may decline to reveal the requester's identity or intended use.

In processing the request, the office does not have an obligation to create new records or perform a search or research for information in the office's records. An electronic record is deemed to exist so long as a computer is already programmed to produce the record through the office's standard use of sorting, filtering, or querying features. Although not required by law, the office should consider generating new records when it makes sense and is practical under the circumstances.

In processing a request for inspection of a public record, an office employee may accompany the requester during inspection to make certain original records are not taken or altered.

A copy of the most recent edition of the Ohio Sunshine Laws Manual is available via the Ohio Attorney General's website (www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/YellowBook) for the purpose of keeping employees of the office and the public educated as to the office's obligations under Ohio's Public Records Act, Ohio's Open Meetings Act, records retention laws, and the Personal Information Systems Act.

DENIAL AND REDACTION OF RECORDS

If the requester makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request such that the office cannot reasonably identify what public records are being requested, the request may be denied, but the office must then provide the requester an opportunity to revise the request by informing the requester of the manner in which records are maintained and accessed by the office.

If the office withholds, redacts, or otherwise denies requested records, it must provide an explanation, including legal authority, for the denial(s). If the initial request was made in writing, the explanation must also be in writing. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions may be redacted and the rest must be released. When making public records available for public inspection or copying, the office shall notify the requester of any redaction or make the redaction plainly visible.

COPYING AND MAILING COSTS

Those seeking public records may be charged only the actual cost of making copies, not labor. The charge for paper copies is 10 cents per page. The charge for crash reports is set by the State of Ohio at 4 dollars per report, or you may go to <https://ohtraffdata.dps.ohio.gov/crashretrieval> to retrieve it yourself at no cost. **Reports are to be paid upon pick up or prior to emailing or mailing, by Cashier's check, money order, or cash. Please do not mail cash.**

If a requester asks that documents be delivered to them, he or she may be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies or other actual costs of delivery.