



Modesto CopWatch and “Know Your Rights” are projects of Valley Improvement Projects (VIP). For more information on reporting police misconduct, trainings, and legal assistance please contact us at:

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COPWATCH HANDBOOK

**AN INTRODUCTION TO
CITIZEN MONITORING
OF THE POLICE**



This handbook was edited from the Berkeley CW Handbook to fit the needs of Modesto and Stanislaus County.

NOTES

Name of copwatcher:

Incident Report #:

COPWATCH USE ONLY ABOVE THIS LINE

COPWATCH INCIDENT REPORT FORM

If the victim/witness would like to have ID confided check here

Time & Place

Date: _____ Time: _____ a.m. / p.m.

Exact Location: _____

Officers Involved

Officer Names	Badge #	Police Department	Police Car Lic. #
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Victim Info

Name: _____ Phone # _____

Address/Contact info: _____

Victim was arrested wants to file complaint needs a Lawyer other _____

Suspected Charge _____ Injuries: _____

Witnesses

Name	Phone #	info/evidence they obtain
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Description

_____ (cont. on back if needed)

10-CODES

Ten-1 Message not understood
Ten-2 Signal is good
Ten-3 Stop transmitting
Ten-4 Message received (OK)
Ten-5 Relay info to _____
Ten-6 Station is busy
Ten-7 Out of service
Ten-8 In service
Ten-9 Repeat last message
Ten-10 Negative (“no”)
Ten-11 _____ in service
Ten-12 Stand by
Ten-13 Report _____ conditions
Ten-14 Information
Ten-15 Message delivered
Ten-16 Reply to message
Ten-17 In Route
Ten-18 Urgent
Ten-19 Contact _____
Ten-20 Unit location
Ten-21 Call by phone
Ten-22 Cancel last message
Ten-23 Arrived at scene
Ten-24 Assignment completed
Ten-25 Meet _____
Ten-26 Estimated time of arrival is _____
Ten-27 Require information on license
Ten-28 Require vehicle registration information
Ten-29 Check records
Ten-30 Use caution
Ten-31 Pick up
Ten-32 Units requested
Ten-33 Emergency! Help needed
Ten-34 Correct time

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended to introduce people to the main concepts of police observation. It is far from complete and we certainly learn more every day. It is true that in different parts of the country and in different situations, the people will devise CopWatching methods which better suit their own situation. Please use the information in this handbook as a way of stimulating discussion in your organization and providing a basis for forming your own police monitoring project. It can be quite challenging and at times rewarding. Good luck. Hope this helps.

WHO IS COPWATCH

We are a group of community residents and students who have become outraged by the escalation of police misconduct, harassment and brutality in recent years. We have joined together to fight for our rights and the rights of our community by taking on the task of directly monitoring police conduct. That's right. We walk the streets and watch the police. Although it is important to resist police brutality by taking cops to court, filing complaints and having demonstrations, we believe that it is crucial to be in the streets letting the police know that THE PEOPLE will hold them accountable for their behavior in the community. We have no single political or religious belief. Our volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds. What we share is the belief that citizen participation in these issues and monitoring of the police is a crucial first step towards building a movement capable of stopping police violence and of challenging the increasingly powerful role of police in our society. If you have been a victim of police abuse, witness abuse or are just plain fed up with police misconduct and want to do something about it, give us a call. We will train you to COPWATCH. We also need artists, writers, researchers, outreach workers, organizers and others to help. We are an all-volunteer group so your help is ALWAYS needed!

SQUELCH: This knob, right next to the volume knob, is adjusted to cut out the static between messages. It's like the mute button on an FM tuner.

MANUAL/SCAN: These are two buttons on the front of the scanner. When the scanner is first turned on, it is in scan mode, meaning that it flips through all 1000 channels repeatedly until it comes to a channel being used. It will monitor this channel until the transmission is ended and then resume scanning. Sometimes, you might want to stay on just one channel to monitor an important exchange. To do this, press the MANUAL button. The scanner will stay on the current channel. Every time you press the MANUAL button, you go up one channel. Pressing the SCAN button resumes scanning. When using the scanner, you are basically listening for locations.

You want to find out WHERE to go to observe the police. Don't be distracted by all of the other conversation happening on the scanner. Also, in recent years, the police have reduced their use of radios and rely more on cell phones and computer terminals in their cars. Don't worry if you aren't hearing much. There might not be much going on.

If the scanner starts to act funny, the batteries are probably going dead. It uses four AA batteries. If you have to buy batteries while on shift, save you receipt so that we can reimburse you later. Also, try to be discreet when using the scanner. It can easily make people on the street think that you are a cop or are working in some official capacity for the state. Keep it in your backpack and use it like you would a walkman.



TECHNICAL SUPPORT

VIDEO CAMERA

COPWATCH uses a variety of video cameras. Some are digital others are semi-digital. This handbook can't teach you how to be a skilled videographer, but here are some points to keep in mind when filming:

- Don't film people who obviously don't want to be filmed. Tell people you are with CopWatch and ask their permission. We want them to know we are there to support them.
- Don't film criminal conduct if you see any. Focus on the police.
- When you film, try not to record yourself getting into arguments with the police. It is very frustrating when we have good footage of an event, but a hostile commentary from the videographer. Try to let the situation speak for itself. Let your partner do the talking if it is necessary.
- Be sure to date and time stamp the footage (press the button which gives the date and time on the screen.). Try to video location markers, street signs etc. to verify the location.
- If you do film anything significant please transfer the footage to VHS tape and label it properly. If you can't do this then tell someone in COPWATCH who can.
- You have the right to videotape, despite what some cops will tell you. If people or cops are in a public place, they don't have a reasonable expectation of privacy so you can tape them. You cannot make audiotape recordings of people without their knowledge.

POLICE SCANNER

The scanner is a portable radio that is used to monitor police radio communications. You can also download a scanner "app" on your cell-phone. The scanner controls that a CopWatcher may want to use are described here:

VOLUME: This knob is on the top of the scanner and it adjusts the volume coming out of the speaker or headphone. It also turns off the scanner so remember this when you are finishing your shift.

MODESTO COPWATCH

COPWATCH was started in March of 1990 in response to escalating abuse of people in the Telegraph Avenue area of Berkeley. At that time, homeless people, young people of color and activists were all experiencing increased harassment by police in an apparent effort to "clean-up" the area. The policy of the city was to "improve" the area and make it more appealing to wealthy tourists. (That meant getting rid of the riff raff.) The people resisted.

The original group that responded to the situation decided that it was most important to carefully document actual incidents of misconduct and to use our presence as a deterrent to these types of injustices. We have continued to patrol the Southside area and to stand with the homeless and young people whenever we see the police stopping them. Sometimes we have been arrested for observing; sometimes we have been threatened. However, the police are definitely aware of CopWatch and, we believe, our presence at certain times and places has prevented police from abusing people's rights (at least while the video camera was on!).

Modesto CopWatch began in 2005, after Andres Raya, a US Marine and Ceres resident shot and killed two police officers. Those close to Raya say he was a victim of police brutality and a witness to police harassment constantly in neighborhood just South of Modesto. After the shooting, the brutality and harassment in that neighborhood was intensified and incidents of abuse became so common that citizens soon came together to form a CopWatch group. In January of 2009 the murders of Oscar Grant in Oakland, and Ritchie Robles in Modesto motivated people to reignite Modesto CopWatch. Check out youtube.com/209copwatch for videos.

MCW provides Know Your Rights (KYR) Trainings in the Central Valley, hands out KYR cards and other info about local cops, we videotape police everywhere we go, with our video camera, with our phone cameras, or with our pen and paper and inform people why we do it. We want to encourage videotaping cops as part of our Culture, like a reflex.

STOP>WATCH>RECORD>REPORT when necessary.

THE PURPOSE

I. To Reduce Police Violence through Accountability

1. Directly observe the police on the street
 - a. Watch and document incidents
 - b. Maintain principles of non-violence while asserting the rights of the detained person.
 - c. Be a witness for the detained person
 - d. Demonstrate citizen monitoring for those observing an incident
 - e. Educate the public about police conduct
2. Follow up with public pressure in legal proceedings
 - a. Support brutality victims in defense of false charges
 - b. Encourage and assist people in filing complaints or even suing police
 - c. Lobby to stop discriminatory legislation and policies that increase police powers over people's civil and human rights

Berkeley Copwatch is the most recent in a long line of historic, Grassroots efforts to control the police including the Black Panther Party, the Brown Berets and others. There are other organizations around the country who are also taking up Copwatching. For example, in cities such as Denver, Houston, Portland, New York, Tucson, Modesto and many others. The movement for community-based responses to police brutality is growing. With the 2004 release of our new training video, "These Streets Are Watching", there has been a surge in interest in Citizen monitoring of the police. To get a copy check out: berkeleycopwatch.org, or contact Valley Improvement Projects at (209) 589-9277.

Our belief is that if we are to reduce police misconduct, we must reduce community calls for service from the police. We must begin to solve problems without the police whenever possible. This is an experimental strategy and if you are interested in helping or learning more, holla!

IN CASE OF ARREST

If you are arrested, the police must tell you why you are being arrested. You will want to get the badge number of the officer who is arresting you and remember- you have the right to remain silent. Don't talk about your case to anyone except your lawyer- there are lots of video cameras and informants in jail! The court must provide you with a lawyer if you can't afford one. You have the right to speak to a lawyer before arraignment.

If you are arrested, you will be searched with or without your permission. As soon as possible, and in no case later than three hours after booking, you have the right to three phone calls: to a friend or relative, to a lawyer, and to a bail bondsman.

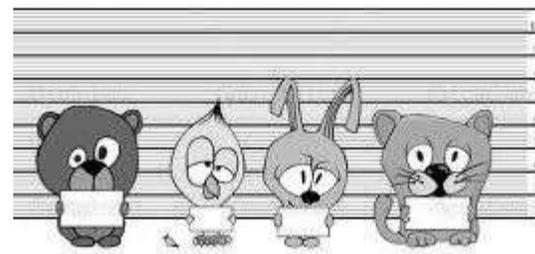
IF SOMEONE ELSE IS ARRESTED

Find out where they are being held, what the charges are and how much bail will cost call the following:

Stanislaus County District Attorney: (209) 525-5550
Juvenile: (209) 525-4599
Stanislaus County Public Defender: (209) 525-4200
Juvenile: (209) 525-459

Men's Jail
1115 H. Street
Modesto, CA. 95354
209-491-8727

Public Safety Center
200 East Hackett Rd.
Modesto, Ca. 95358
(209) 525-5630



Be Careful:

- Don't inadvertently collaborate in a crime (don't become a look-out, warning if police are coming, etc.)
- Don't let people use the COPWATCH name to shield illegal stuff.
- You may get arrested at times, but if you are doing good COPWATCHing the organization will support you.
- Talking to cops is a bad idea. It can undermine your credibility with the community as well as giving the police information about you and the group.
- Taking pictures or videotaping can be a problem if the detainee doesn't want you to. Respect them. Tell them that you are working to stop police misconduct. If this doesn't satisfy them, turn off the camera. Remember that you are representing COPWATCH with every act and every word. Those that come after you will have an easier time if you do a good job.
- Don't make promises that you/we can't keep. Don't tell people that we will get them a lawyer, take the cops to court, etc. Tell people that we will work with them to get justice. Invite them to a meeting.
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" if you are asked legal questions. Better that than giving out wrong information.

END SHIFT

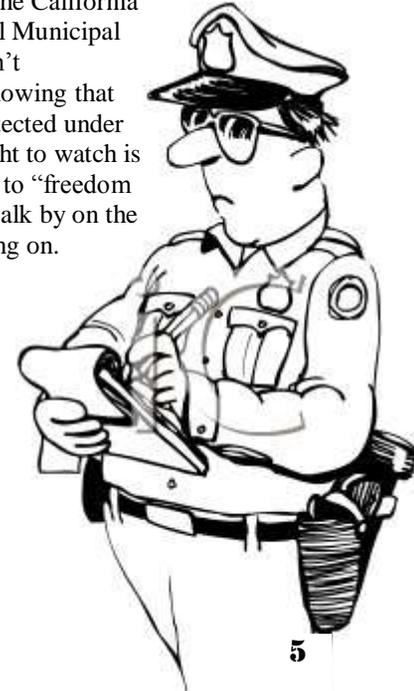
Return completed incident reports to the office. Be sure that they are legible and that you put your name on it in case office people need to do follow-up. Return scanner and any other equipment to the office for the next COPWATCHers to use. Please check the equipment and leave a note if there is anything wrong with it.

II. To Empower and Unite The Community By Looking Out For Each Other

1. Educate the community about their rights
 - a. Distribute literature and publish findings
 - b. Do *Know Your Rights* training and any other classes, forums, demonstrations that can help the public understand the real situation.
2. Expand community support for victims of police crime and community based efforts to organize against brutality.
3. Encourage people to solve problems WITHOUT police intervention. Explore alternatives to calling the police.
4. Encourage people to exercise their right to observe the police and to advocate for one another.

THE LAW

It is helpful for COPWATCHers to have an understanding of a few key legal concepts before going out to watch cops. You don't have to be a lawyer to document police activity, but if you want to be more assertive about your rights and those of the community then it is worth taking some time to become familiar with the law. There are several sources of law. The ones that are most relevant to COPWATCH are the state laws which are found in the California Penal Code and local laws which are part of the local Municipal Codes. There are federal laws that you probably won't run into much on the streets. However, it is worth knowing that everyone's civil rights are, at least theoretically, protected under the U.S. Constitution and federal law. In fact, the right to watch is constitutionally protected activity based on our right to "freedom of assembly". Remember, if people are allowed to walk by on the street, you are allowed to stop and watch what's going on.



TYPES OF STOPS

It is very important that you understand why an officer is stopping someone and what their rights are when they are stopped. Determine exactly what kind of stop the officer is making.

Consensual Stop

This is when the cop approaches and begins talking to you. The cop may even ask to see your ID. You don't have to show it. Ask the cop "Am I free to go?" or "Am I being detained?" You don't have to talk to the cop or even remain in the area unless the cop says "No, you can't go" and has a reasonable suspicion to detain you. However, the cop doesn't have to tell you why you are being detained.

Detention

The police are allowed to detain you if they have a "reasonable suspicion" to believe that you have committed or are about to commit a crime. The officer must have some reason for stopping you. They can't just say that you don't look like you live in the Neighborhood or that they "had a hunch". The detention should be limited in its purpose and scope. They can conduct a pat search of the outside of your clothing in order to check for weapons, but you **DO NOT HAVE TO CONSENT TO A SEARCH** of your pockets or bags. You do not have to answer any questions except to identify yourself and give your address.

Arrest

This means that you are in police custody and you are being charged with a crime. You will be thoroughly searched as part of the booking process. You have a right to know why you are being arrested. Penal Code section 841 says that "The person making the arrest must, on the request of the person he or she is arresting, inform the latter of the offense for which he or she is being arrested". Even though police often won't tell you, you have the right to remain silent and the right to a lawyer. Don't give up these rights.

These are minor offenses such as jaywalking, illegal parking, open container of alcohol in public, being in certain parks after curfew, being a minor in possession of spray paint or large marking pens, etc. When an officer sees this kind of activity, s/he can ask to see ID. If you have ID and you do not have any outstanding warrants, the cop should just write you a ticket and be done with it. If you don't have ID on you, the cop **HAS THE OPTION OF TAKING YOU TO**

YOU DO NOT WANT TO INTERFERE, YOU SIMPLY WISH TO OBSERVE.

More Assertive Style:

- Ask victims if they know why they are being arrested or detained
- Get the badge number. Ask the cop if you can't see it.
- If the stop is vague, ask the cop to name the Penal Code Section that they are enforcing.
- Have educational conversations with people standing around.
- Don't piss the cop off if you can help it. Don't let it get personal. **NO NAME CALLING!!!**
- Identify yourself as „COPWATCH“.
- Try to stay until the stop is concluded. Remember that Rodney King was just a traffic stop originally.
- If a person wants to take action, give them complaint forms or refer them to the COPWATCH office.

Principles: Non-violence:

- Be polite to everyone you meet including the police. Don't insult or incite them. This is counterproductive.
- Don't carry anything illegal or give cops an opportunity to bust you for non-COPWATCH activity.
- Of course no weapons, knives, drugs, etc. Do not COPWATCH if you have had alcohol.
- Don't yell. Speak in a calm, audible voice. Avoid quick or sudden movements when you are around cops. Don't run to a scene. Walk.
- Remain visible to the officer at all times. Keep your hands visible at all times, too. Do not use flash cameras or video lighting when officers are engaging in a routine stop of someone.
- If a stop escalates into unnecessary use of force use whatever tools at your disposal to record and document the situation.
- Don't assume who is right and who is wrong. Observe and document before taking action.
- Try to be helpful to the citizen being stopped without making his/her situation worse. Our goal is to defuse the incidents of harassment and violence, not escalate them.

DURING SHIFT

Shifts can last for approximately 3 hours. You and your partner can decide where you will go if there has not been a request for CWers to be in a certain neighborhood. Please be on time for your shift as your partner is probably waiting for you. If you are unable to work your shift please call your partner and the shift coordinator so that you can get a substitute. Try to be on the street for as much of your shift as possible (don't spend an hour in a coffee shop). Be where people can see and talk to you.

After each incident, take time to fully fill out the incident report and return it to the office. We will enter this information into the database.

As you observe a situation, one partner records what officers are saying or doing, while the other one quietly gets information from witnesses. Consult and share information. Get a firm grasp of the situation FIRST. Record as much information as possible. Witness names and numbers and badge numbers are most important. In fact, every officer must wear either a number or a nameplate when they are in uniform. (Penal Code section 830.10) It also helps to write down when, where and what time the incident happened.

If there has been an injury, encourage the person to see a doctor and take pictures of the injuries as soon as possible. Distribute CopWatch literature while you are observing a stop so that people understand that you are not just there to be entertained but are actually trying to help.

Remember that you have the right to watch the cops. You don't have the right to interfere. Interfering with a cop is a violation of penal code section 148 (delaying, obstructing or resisting arrest). If a cop wants to send you a message, they will arrest you for 148 and then, even if they don't press charges, you still had to go through the unpleasant experience of being arrested.

When you observe police remember that you don't want to make the cop more nervous than they already are. Keep your hands visible at all times. Don't approach an officer from behind or stand behind them. Don't make any sudden movements or raise your voice to the cop. Try to keep the situation calm. You don't want to get the person in more trouble. If an officer tells you to step back, tell the officer that

THE STATION TO VERIFY YOUR IDENTITY OR SIMPLY WRITING YOU A TICKET AND LETTING YOU GO. This is up to the officer. You aren't supposed to have to go to jail for infractions in and of themselves. You would not expect to be searched during this kind of stop.

TYPES OF VIOLATIONS

Infractions

These are minor offenses such as jaywalking, illegal parking, open container of alcohol in public, being in certain parks after curfew, being a minor in possession of spray paint or large marking pens, etc. When an officer sees this kind of activity, s/he can ask to see ID. If you have ID and you do not have any outstanding warrants, the cop should just write you a ticket and be done with it. If you don't have ID on you, the cop HAS THE OPTION OF TAKING YOU TO THE STATION TO VERIFY YOUR IDENTITY OR SIMPLY WRITING YOU A TICKET AND LETTING YOU GO. This is up to the officer. You aren't supposed to have to go to jail for in- fractions in and of themselves. You would not expect to be searched during this kind of stop.

Misdemeanors

These are crimes punishable by up to a year in jail such as shoplifting, trespassing, resisting, delaying or interfering with an officer in the course of his/her duty. Expect that you will be searched, arrested and taken to jail until you are either arraigned, bailed out or released on your own recognizance. (O.R.ed) There are certain misdemeanors where the officer has the discretion to write you a citation or to take you into custody. Remember-don't talk to the officer about your case and do not discuss it with folks you meet in jail. Sometimes people in jail can be used to get information about your case (informants).

Felonies

These are major crimes punishable by a year or more in prison. Murder, rape, robbery and many drug related crimes are considered to be felonies. Expect that you will be searched thoroughly and will be in custody at least until you are taken before a judge and allowed to enter a plea (this is arraignment).

EXTRA LEGAL INFO

Answering Questions

Legally, when a person is arrested or detained by a police officer, he or she does not have to answer any questions to the officer other than to provide a name and address. You have the right to remain silent, but DO NOT lie to a cop. That is a crime.

Resisting or Obstructing an Officer

Penal Code Section 148.a states that “every person who willfully resists, delays, or obstructs (any police officer) in the discharge or attempt to discharge” of his or her duty, is punishable by fine or imprisonment. The police will often threaten COPWATCHers with this charge, but remember you do have the right to observe as long as you are not attempting to interfere with the officer.

Use of Force to Effect Arrest

Section 835.a of the Penal Code explains that the only “legal” use of force by an officer is that used in order to attain an arrest. “Any peace officer who has reasonable cause to believe that the person to be arrested has committed a public offense may use reasonable force to effect the arrest, to prevent escape or to overcome resistance.”

Assault by an Officer

Police brutality is defined in the Penal Code as, “Police breaches of due process guaranteed by the physical abuse of citizens without legitimate cause.” Section 149 of the Penal Code makes it illegal for a cop to assault or beat any person “without lawful necessity.”

Police Search Powers

Police may detain someone if they have “reasonable suspicion” that specific facts connect that person to a specific crime. In this case, the cops can also pat someone down to feel for a weapon, and if they feel something that feels like a weapon, they can go into that person’s clothing to look for it. Otherwise the cops can only search someone’s pockets, back pack, or belongings if that person:

- Has been arrested for a specific crime,
- Has a search clause as a condition of probation, or
- Gives the police permission, which nobody is obliged to do.

SHIFT PROCEDURES

BEGIN SHIFT

You can do a walking shift, a bicycle shift or a driving shift. Walking shifts are great for getting to know folks and having lots of community interaction. Driving shifts get you to the scene much faster. Be careful when driving to park your car away from the police. Also:

- Be sure your warrant status, bike or car is up to date. Don’t give the cops any opportunity to bust you. Assume that this could happen.
- Identification can be very helpful if the police detain you.
- Have a partner for safety as well as good COPWATCHing. It is VERY important not to confront the police alone. You must have a witness and someone who can verify YOUR story in case of a problem.
- Organize to meet your partner at a mutually agreeable time and location.
- Make sure that you are not carrying anything illegal! No knives, drugs, etc.
- Wear a COPWATCH identification badge
- Be sure that you or your partner brings things you will need to COPWATCH:
 - Incident forms
 - COPWATCH Handbook
 - Complaint Forms
 - COPWATCH literature to distribute
 - Tape recorder, scanner, video recorder, cameras
 - Penal Code



EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY

As people on the streets serving the public, we are not only concerned with the cops. We are concerned about the PEOPLE. Our effectiveness as COPWATCHers will be greatly enhanced if we are trusted by the community. During our shifts, we must try to get to know the people who hang out on the street. For this reason we will try to schedule people who know the area with those who are newer to the scene. Building relationship is crucial. We can listen to people and help when it is possible. This aspect of COPWATCH depends on the willingness of the members to get to know and appreciate the street community.

When the streets are quiet and there is no police activity, a COPWATCHer can spend time distributing the "Know Your Rights" cards or just getting to know people. Introduce yourself. Explain to people that you are with COPWATCH and that you want to hear their stories. If people know that you are trying to help and that you care, that can be empowering.

Depending on how familiar and/or comfortable you are, you can assist people with problems that arise. We want our community to solve problems wherever possible WITHOUT POLICE INTERVENTION. If you can help folks resolve a conflict, communicate, understand each other you are doing great. It is crucial that we move our communities away from the idea that we are totally dependent upon police for justice and safety.



Police Seizure Powers

Police may not confiscate someone's belongings unless they are illegal or that person has been arrested for a crime. If possessions are confiscated, the California Penal Code entitles the owner to a receipt (1535) and a return of the possessions after the resolution of the case (1537). Any evidence obtained through the seizure may be suppressed from being used in court if the seizure was illegal. (1538.5)

Gang Profiling

Sometimes cops use petty laws to stop people in order to take their pictures. These photos are often used to create files on people and to portray people as "gang members". Detaining people to take photos merely because they are suspected gang members is impermissible. (People vs. Rodriguez (1993) 21 Cal.App.4th 232.)

Panhandling

647.c California Penal Code it is illegal to "accost" people for the purpose of begging. Modesto also limits where people can panhandle, such as at stop-lights and bank ATMs.

Lodging

California Penal Code provision against lodging in any building, structure, vehicle, or place without the permission of the owner.

Trespassing

Section 602 of the California Penal Code outlines trespassing violations. It is a violation to "refuse to leave after being asked to do so."

"Drunk in Public"

California Penal Code 647(f) prohibits being "drunk in public". Simply put, you are "drunk in public" under California law if:

1. your level of intoxication makes you unable to exercise care for your safety or for the safety of others, or
2. your level of intoxication interferes with, obstructs, or prevents others from using streets, sidewalks, or other "public ways".

Bicycles

Riding a bike on the sidewalk is illegal. It is a misdemeanor. Cops and juveniles in residential areas are exempt from this provision.

Obstructing the Sidewalk

(a) Findings. The Modesto City Council finds that pedestrian safety and the free flow of pedestrian traffic, as well as public safety in general, is substantially impaired by people sitting or lying on public sidewalks, streets, or other public places in a way that makes passage by others difficult. Such conduct presents a hazard, not only to pedestrians, but also to those who position themselves in such a way as to block public passage. In addition, the Modesto City Council finds that public welfare is promoted by economically sound commercial areas within the City of Modesto. Easy accessibility to goods and services attracts both businesses and consumers and results in tax revenues to support public services. This results in an increase in economic productivity.

People who sit, lie down, or substantially obstruct pedestrian traffic inconvenience and intimidate patrons. This conduct leads to a rapid decline in commercial activity and economic growth. Such a decline ultimately threatens public safety, public health and the public welfare of the citizens.

Minors in Possession of Tobacco

It is unlawful for any person under the age of 18 years to purchase, possess, use tobacco products, cigarette papers or any other paraphernalia related to the use of tobacco products.



EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

Our main tactic in COPWATCH will be to discourage police brutality and harassment by letting the cops know that their actions are being recorded and that they will be held accountable for their acts of harassment and abuse. To this end we will:

- Record incidents of abuse and harassment
- Follow through on complaints
- Publicize incidents of abuse and harassment
- Educate those who don't believe that police harassment exists

DIFFUSE SITUATIONS

People don't want to be arrested. As COPWATCHers, we don't want to escalate a situation to where police arrest someone as a way of getting back at us. We want cops to treat people with respect and to observe their rights. Often, cops forget that homeless people and others actually have rights. We may need to remind them from time to time. We must learn how to assert our rights and to encourage others to assert their rights without endangering someone who is already in some amount of trouble.

We do not attempt to interfere with officers as they make routine arrests. We document and try to inform the cops when we feel that they are violating policy or the law. Attempting to stop someone from being arrested often has serious consequences for the person being detained as well as for the reputation of COPWATCH as being a non-violence based organization.

In a physical encounter with police, we must realize that the cops have weapons, prisons, courts and judges to back them up. In addition, we do not want people to be nervous when they see COPWATCH coming to help them. We want to keep people from going to jail in the first place and not send them to jail with more serious charges.