



# REAL-TIME SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AT LAS CRUCES POLICE DEPARTMENT

## *WHAT'S HERE AND WHAT'S NEXT*



In Las Cruces, New Mexico, the police department is focused on creating a safe and vibrant community. Serving a population of 100,000, which grows by a fifth when the state university is in session, the 200 sworn officers at Las Cruces Police Department seek out ways to improve efficiency through technology — which led them to Axon. From beta testing Axon Body 3 cameras to an upcoming full deployment of the Officer Safety Plan (OSP) 7+, Las Cruces' long-term partnership with Axon has helped them elevate their agency programs, and they look forward to continued developments in the future.

### **/ NEXT-GENERATION BODY CAMERAS FOR ALL**

Las Cruces was an instrumental beta partner in the development of the Axon Body 3 camera, providing invaluable user testing and insight throughout, and they are pleased with the results. “All the officers love it,” says Officer Rob Benavidez, who leads the Research and Development Unit at the agency, responsible for implementing new technology projects and developing the according policies and procedures. He's been key in evaluating the Officer Safety Plan 7+, the suite of tech solutions that brings Axon's network together, of which Body 3 is one component.

**“The Axon Body 3 is the best version [of body cameras],”** says Officer Benavidez, describing it as “robust” and “easy for the officer to interact with.” When a state mandate came down requiring all officers to wear a body-worn camera, Las Cruces already had approximately 60 Body 3s in circulation — and with the advanced audio, imaging, and rugged reliability of the cameras, it was a no-brainer to equip the rest of the force with them as well. The agency is now in the process of a phased rollout to all sworn officers, as well as about thirty non-sworn personnel.

### **/ USING REAL-TIME AWARENESS**

While Body 3's rugged hardware and advanced video made it a cut above, it was the real-time capabilities — alerts, mapping, and livestreaming through Axon Respond for Devices — that really elevated the camera for department leadership. After all, Las Cruces is no stranger to leveraging resources to the fullest, often to serve multiple functions. Many officers at Las Cruces serve as dual officers, involved in both patrol and SWAT operations. Noting a recent rise in high-risk events in the area, Officer Benavidez says that Respond has been instrumental in situational awareness for SWAT operations and hostage negotiations.

A SWAT commander, using Respond, **“knows exactly where his officers are on the scene and where — and how — they're covering,”** says Officer Benavidez. The ability to pinpoint officers on a map and share information and advice in real-time has made their SWAT responses “100% better.”

Best of all, as the agency continues to leverage Respond, everyone in the agency can have a voice in maximizing the technology — officers, for example, can proactively request assistance from supervisors at complicated scenes. This is why supervisors at Las Cruces have been transparent about when and how it's being used. **“The more [patrol officers] know about it, they get creative and [think of] ways to use it I'm not even aware of...and then they let me know and it makes everyone better,”** says Officer Benavidez.

## BENEFITTING FROM THE BUNDLE

As Officer Benavidez investigated the best bundling option to roll out Axon Body 3s to every officer in the agency, OSP 7+ looked more and more like the right fit. Given that he is responsible for running the gamut of TASER, use of force, and defensive tactics training at his agency, every aspect of OSP 7+ offered an opportunity for continuous improvement, from the more efficient TASER cartridge program to the Virtual Reality training modules that support community engagement.

**“The ability to make us more properly trained is huge,”** says Officer Benavidez, who says the agency is invested in supporting mental health — both that of officers and of the community — and building greater empathy in officers. He looks forward to future opportunities to use technology to support these priorities, from allowing trained mental health professionals to weigh in real-time on calls using Respond for Devices, to supplementing traditional training with Virtual Reality modules for better outcomes.

Las Cruces Police Department has already seen the benefits of their partnership with Axon, but knows that with new technology and fresh ideas, the future potential is limitless. Using Axon Body 3, Respond for Devices, and the other solutions in OSP 7+, they look forward to continuing to cultivate a strong and safe community.

