

# STAYING SAFER DURING ICE & CopWatch

**ICE & CopWatch is the legal practice of monitoring and documenting law enforcement activity in order to deter or de-escalate abuse.**

ICE & CopWatch is a key way to help keep our communities safe(r). Documenting any form of law enforcement in public space is legal as long as you're not interfering. However, it's important to note that it comes with risk because cops don't like being watched. The Trump regime's escalation of ICE violence means this risk has increased. Always assess your vulnerabilities before ICE & CopWatching.

## ICE & CopWatch 101

**Anytime you see law enforcement activity in your community:**

- Assess your surroundings and your own vulnerabilities, then start filming.
- Capture the full scene without zooming in too much.
- Say the date, time, and location aloud. If possible, call out license plates or badge numbers.
- If you feel it won't escalate the situation, ask others nearby to record, too!

## 3 Ds of CopWatch:

### **DETER**

**police violence before it starts**

### **DE-ESCALATE**

**violence if it's already begun**

### **DOCUMENT**

**abuse if you can't de-escalate**

## Here are some guidelines for staying safer while documenting law enforcement.

These are tools that you can choose to use, depending on your situation. They are not rules – but guidelines to mitigate risk of arrest or injury of yourself. Those who choose not to use them are not wrong as long as they are acting with integrity, nor will these work in every circumstance.

1. **Take a breath & center yourself:** It's scary & enraging. Stay as balanced as possible & let the 3Ds guide you.
2. **Assess before taking action:**
  - **Assess your risk:** What is your immigration status? Do you have an open criminal case? Are you carrying weapons or contraband? Are you feeling even-tempered and focused? What will the consequences be if you're injured or arrested?
  - **Assess your conditions:** Who are you with? (No one, someone vulnerable, someone who is trained to ICE & CopWatch etc.). Are there other people observing? How hostile are the officers?
  - **Then decide:** Are you ready to film? Do you want the officers and community members to know you're watching? How close to the incident do you feel you can risk being?
3. **Attempt to de-escalate** officers without giving up your right to watch + document by strategically complying:
  - If officers say you can't film, explain in a calm even tone, "I'm not interfering. I'm only exercising my legal right to film law enforcement."
  - If officers tell you to step back, say you will step back. Take one step back. Say, "I'm cooperating. I have stepped back. I'm not trying to stop you from doing your job. I'm just exercising my legal right to observe law enforcement."
  - If officers ask you for ID, you may want to show a valid ID. While you are completely within your right NOT to show ID, the reality is, cops frequently arrest people who choose to assert this right. If asked for ID, try to keep your camera running during your interaction. Never show false identification or immigration papers.
  - If an officer draws a gun: comply with their demands to avoid getting hurt.
4. **Don't talk too much:** Say the date, time, location and identifying info about the cops out loud so it's recorded on your footage. Allow your footage to capture other SALUTE (size, action, location, uniform, time, equipment) info. However, don't fully narrate what's going on or add commentary as you may drown out what's being said during the incident, inadvertently incriminate yourself or others, or escalate the officers.
5. **Call a friend** or comrade and let them know you're Cop/ICEWatching, so someone will know if you're arrested.
6. **Debrief:** It's difficult to observe abuse and harassment. Call someone to talk through what you witnessed.
7. **Don't automatically post footage.** Share it with JC or another trusted organization who can help you assess. You don't want to inadvertently expose the person you are trying to help to more risk.