

North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officers (IFCOs) may be seen wearing small video cameras on their person during patrols and inspections conducted at sea or ashore. This leaflet explains the reasons why, when and of whom recording will most likely be carried out and who will be informed that recording is taking place.

What will a video camera normally be used to record?

The equipment enables IFCOs to record picture and sound evidence in any situation where it is considered to be appropriate to the circumstances which are encountered, during the course of their work.

What is the primary purpose of making video and sound recordings?

Where an offence is suspected, IFCOs must endeavour to discover all the relevant details surrounding the case. The use of digital picture and sound records could be critical to show exactly what happened and what was said. It should help to avoid disputes, reduce the time taken to establish important facts and clearly show the truth of many matters.

In what circumstances will a video camera be operated?

A video camera worn by an IFCO may be used to record the approach to any vessel, vehicle or person engaged in fishing activity. This is regardless of whether or not an offence is suspected, because offences sometimes only become apparent during the final approach and evidence can sometimes be disposed of before a boarding or inspection takes place.

Where a boat is inspected at sea or berthed alongside, at least one boarding IFCO is likely to have a camera system on their person. The camera will be running at all times, but recording will only be activated when an offence has been suspected and the person(s) being recorded will be informed.

At least one IFCO conducting a shore based inspection of fish or shellfish is likely to have a camera system on their person. The camera will be running at all times, but recording will only be activated when an offence has been suspected and the person(s) being recorded will be informed. Picture recording will not be carried out during the search of a dwelling place unless prior legal permissions have been granted.

If at the scene of a suspected offence a relevant person is questioned, not including through a formal interview, the camera will be operated in most circumstances.

Who will be told if a video camera is being used for recording?

The skipper and/or owner on board a vessel boarded at sea will be informed as soon as practicable during an inspection. Other boat crew or passengers on board a boat will be told if a camera is in operation, should they be directly encountered.

For fish or shellfish inspected ashore, any person who is encountered at the scene and believed to own or, to be responsible for the fish or shellfish, will be told if the camera is in operation.

Who can view or listen to a video camera recording?

Only North Western IFCOs or a person acting in a legal capacity on behalf of North Western IFCA will be allowed to routinely view or listen to recordings. However, during the course of an investigation, recordings will be offered to be shown to relevant persons involved in a case, including the Defence in a prosecution. It may be presented as evidence in any court proceedings.