

	Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures		
Subject: Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR)	Issued: 09/08/2026	TBP:	Number: D-34

Revision: This draft supersedes and replaces D-34, which was issued 03/15/2022.

Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish uniform procedures for the use of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) systems operated by or on behalf of the Abilene Police Department. This directive governs all ALPR platforms used by the Department, including fixed, mobile, and portable systems, and establishes rules for authorized use, alert verification, database searches, data retention, data sharing, auditing, and transparency.

Policy

It is the policy of the Abilene Police Department to use ALPR systems only for legitimate law enforcement and public safety purposes, as directed by Departmental policy and in accordance with state and federal law. The Department will protect the privacy rights of members of the public by restricting access to ALPR data, requiring a documented reason for every search, limiting how long data is retained, controlling how data is shared with other agencies, and auditing system use. ALPR data is restricted to official law enforcement use only. All employees shall abide by the guidelines set forth in this policy.

Definitions

Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) System: A system consisting of one or more cameras and supporting computer hardware and software designed to capture images of vehicle license plates, interpret the plate characters through optical character recognition, and compare the results against one or more designated law enforcement databases. Captured data typically includes a photographic image, the interpreted plate text, the date and time of capture, and the location of capture.

Fixed ALPR: An ALPR system where the cameras and equipment are attached to a pole, structure, or other fixed location.

Mobile ALPR: An ALPR system mounted on or in a Department vehicle that reads license plates during vehicle operation, compares reads against Hot Lists and Provides alert notifications to the operator.

Portable ALPR: A transportable ALPR system, such as a trailer mounted unit, that can be temporarily deployed and relocated as needed.

Alert Data: Information captured by an ALPR relating to a license plate that matches a license plate on a Hot List.

Hot List: A database populated with license plates of specific concern to law enforcement. Hot List sources include, but are not limited to, TCIC, NCIC, the Texas Department of Public Safety, and lists created by the Abilene Police Department.

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Hit: A positive indication of a match between a license plate observed and read by the ALPR and a license plate on a Hot List. Verification of the plate and the current wanted, or stolen status must be completed prior to taking law enforcement action.

Authorized User: A sworn or non-sworn member of the Department who has been authorized by the Chief of Police to operate an ALPR system or to access and use stored ALPR data, and who has successfully completed Department training.

RTIC Coordinator: The employee designated by the Chief of Police to administer and manage the Department's ALPR program.

Criminal Justice Purpose: An activity directly related to the detection, investigation, or prosecution of a criminal offense, the apprehension of a wanted person, or the location of a missing or endangered person.

ALPR Platforms Operated by the Department

The Department may operate fixed, mobile (in-car), and portable ALPR systems. The specific systems in use, their vendors, configured retention periods, and sharing configurations are documented in the ALPR System Inventory maintained by the RTIC Coordinator. All systems, regardless of vendor or type, are governed by this directive.

- The Department owns all ALPR data collected by or on behalf of the Department. No vendor may sell, share, or use Department ALPR data for any purpose other than providing contracted services to the Department.
- Vendor agreements for ALPR systems shall be reviewed for consistency with this directive, including data ownership, retention, and sharing terms, before execution or renewal.
- Portable ALPR units will not be placed in the traffic lanes of city streets. Units should be placed near the roadway so they can capture data for vehicles traveling on that roadway.

Authorized and Prohibited Uses

ALPR systems and ALPR data may be used only for a Criminal Justice Purpose. Every use of the system must be capable of being articulated and audited.

The following uses are prohibited:

- Any personal, non-law-enforcement, or curiosity-based use, including searches involving family members, acquaintances, co-workers, public figures, or any person absent a Criminal Justice Purpose.
- Use for harassment, intimidation, or stalking of any person.
- Use to monitor, identify, or track individuals or groups based solely on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

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- Use to surveil or catalog persons engaged in lawful activity protected by the First Amendment, including protests, demonstrations, or religious services, absent a documented criminal predicate.
- Use for any civil or administrative matter, including civil immigration enforcement, unless the use is supported by a criminal warrant or a documented criminal investigation.
- Use to investigate or track a person for conduct that is lawful in the State of Texas.
- Sharing, selling, or disclosing ALPR data to any private party, commercial entity, or member of the public, except as required by law or court order.

Any violation of this section may result in suspension of system access, disciplinary action up to and including termination, and referral for criminal prosecution where applicable.

Alert Verification and Officer Response

Hot List information may not reflect the most current wanted or stolen status of a vehicle or plate. An ALPR alert alone shall not be the basis for law enforcement action. Prior to initiating a stop or other intervention based on alert data, officers shall, when safe to do so:

1. Visually confirm the plate. Officers shall visually verify that the license plate on the vehicle matches identically the suspected license plate from the Hot List, including the state of issue.
2. Confirm current status (Confirmed Read). Officers must receive confirmation by running the visually verified license plate through their MDC or Dispatch to confirm the plate and wanted or stolen status are still active. Once confirmed, a traffic stop may be initiated.
3. Independent Probable Cause. Nothing in this policy prevents an officer from taking law enforcement action on a vehicle if probable cause exists independent of the ALPR alert data.

Database Searches

All searches of stored ALPR data, on any platform, are subject to the following requirements:

- Every search requires a documented search reason and an associated case number, incident number, or CAD event number entered at the time of the search. Generic reasons such as "investigation" or "patrol" without an associated number are not acceptable.
- All searches are recorded under the individual user's credentials and are subject to audit and review by the Department.
- Searches of ALPR networks outside the Department's own cameras, including statewide or nationwide network searches through the Flock Safety platform, require prior supervisor approval, and the approving supervisor shall be documented in the search reason.

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- Authorized Users may search by full plate, partial plate, vehicle description, geographic area, and time period, consistent with training and this policy.
- The ALPR database shall not be queried on behalf of a private party or member of the public.

Hot Lists

- Hot List sources include TCIC, NCIC, the Texas Department of Public Safety, and other criminal justice data sources approved by the ALPR Coordinator.
- Locally created Hot List entries require supervisor approval, must be tied to a documented Criminal Justice Purpose with an associated case number, and must include an expiration or review date not to exceed thirty (30) days. Hot lists that are subject to review must be re-approved by a supervisor prior to becoming reestablished.
- Local Hot List entries shall be removed promptly when the underlying purpose is resolved. The ALPR Coordinator shall review local Hot List entries at least monthly and remove entries that are expired or no longer supported.

Data Retention

1. ALPR data shall be retained for no more than thirty (30) days, after which it is automatically and permanently deleted, unless a different retention period for a specific system is approved in writing by the Chief of Police and documented in the ALPR System Inventory.
2. Case related data: When ALPR data is identified as relevant to a specific case or investigation, the data shall be exported or preserved before the retention period expires and shall be retained in the investigative file or electronically attached to the case in the records management system. Once preserved as evidence, the data is retained in accordance with evidence retention requirements and applicable law.

No employee shall alter system retention settings without the written approval of the Chief of Police. The RTIC Coordinator shall document the configured retention period for each system in the ALPR System Inventory and shall review those settings at least annually.

Data Sharing and Outside Agency Access

The Department controls access to its ALPR data. The following rules govern sharing:

- Outside agency access to the Department's ALPR data requires a written ALPR Data Sharing Agreement approved by the Chief of Police. The agreement shall restrict use to Criminal Justice Purposes, require a documented search reason and case number for each search, prohibit further dissemination without Department approval, and permit the Department to audit and revoke access.

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- Automatic, standing, or default sharing features within the ALPR platform, including statewide and nationwide lookup participation, shall not be enabled except by written approval. The RTIC Coordinator shall document the current sharing configuration.
- The RTIC Coordinator shall maintain a current list of all outside agencies with access to Department ALPR data.
- One-time requests from outside law enforcement agencies for ALPR data or searches must document a Criminal Justice Purpose and an associated case number and shall be performed by an Authorized User of this Department rather than by granting direct access.
- Requests from any agency for ALPR data or searches in support of a civil or administrative matter, including civil immigration enforcement, shall be declined unless supported by a criminal warrant or documented criminal investigation, and shall be forwarded to the Chief of Police or designee for review.

Audits and Oversight

- The ALPR Coordinator shall conduct a documented audit of ALPR system use at least monthly. The audit shall include a random sample of searches performed by Department users and by outside agencies, verifying that each search has a valid documented reason and associated case number.
- Audit findings shall be reported in writing to the Chief of Police.
- Any suspected misuse of an ALPR system or ALPR data shall be reported to a supervisor immediately and shall be investigated. Confirmed misuse may result in suspension of access, disciplinary action, and criminal referral where applicable.
- Supervisors may review search logs of assigned personnel at any time.

Transparency and Public Information

- Requests for records related to the ALPR program are governed by the Texas Public Information Act, Texas Government Code Chapter 552. The Department will respond to such requests in accordance with the Act, including seeking Attorney General rulings where an exception may apply.
- Stored ALPR data is collected for law enforcement purposes and shall not be searched or produced on behalf of private parties outside the requirements of the Texas Public Information Act, a court order, or other legal process.

Private and Third-Party Cameras

Some ALPR platforms permit privately owned cameras, such as those operated by homeowner associations or businesses, to share data or send alerts to law enforcement. The Department shall

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not accept data feeds or alerts from privately owned ALPR cameras except under a written memorandum of understanding approved by the Chief of Police. The RTIC Coordinator shall maintain a list of all approved private camera agreements. Data received from private cameras is subject to all use, search, retention, and audit requirements of this policy.

Training and User Access

- Employees must receive Department approved training before operating an ALPR system or accessing ALPR data. Training will be provided by the RTIC Coordinator or designee.
- All users are required to have individual credentials for access and use of each ALPR system to ensure proper operation and facilitate oversight. Sharing of credentials is prohibited.
- User accounts shall be deactivated promptly upon separation, transfer to a position that does not require access, or suspension of access for misuse.

Mobile ALPR Operations

- Operators assigned to a unit equipped with mobile ALPR will ensure the equipment is turned on during the entire shift, subject to system conditions such as thermal shutdown or camera use for recording.
- Employees must inspect ALPR equipment and notify their supervisor immediately of any damage or malfunction.
- ALPR cameras are mounted and aimed to ensure the maximum accurate reads possible. Only properly trained personnel are authorized to move or adjust the cameras.
- Designated personnel will maintain ALPR cameras, equipment, and Hot Lists.

RTIC Coordinator Responsibilities

The RTIC Coordinator shall:

- Administer and manage the ALPR program across all platforms.
- Complete administrative functions related to the ALPR systems, including entering approved users and assigning user roles.
- Coordinate ALPR training for employees.
- Troubleshoot, document, and coordinate maintenance and repairs on ALPR equipment.
- Conduct and document the audits required by this policy.
- Review and maintain Hot List sources and local Hot List entries.

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- Recommend adjustments to data retention periods to the Police Administration, balancing existing technology, current state law, data storage capabilities, cost, and investigative needs.