



GENERAL ORDERS: Chapter 25

PUBLISHED DATE: 3/8/2024

EFFECTIVE DATE: 3/8/2024

APPROVED BY: Chief Dana Wingert

REVISED DATE:

Automated License Plate Reader Systems

I. Purpose

To establish a policy that will guide the department in the use of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology.

II. Policy

Employees shall follow the guidelines set forth in this policy when using ALPR technology to scan, detect, and identify vehicles or persons of interest. Misuse of this technology and associated data is prohibited.

III. Authorization

The ALPR system shall be restricted to law enforcement use for the purpose of furthering legitimate law enforcement investigations and enhancing public safety. An employee may coordinate the sharing of ALPR data with other law enforcement agencies or at the request of another law enforcement agency within the guidelines of this policy.

IV. Definitions

Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) system – Equipment consisting of fixed cameras, mobile cameras, computer hardware/software, and handheld mobile devices used to automatically recognize and interpret the characters on vehicle license plates. Also known as license plate “recognition” systems.

Alert – A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the ALPR system receives a potential “hit” on a license plate.

Hit – An automatic read matched to a plate that has been registered on a computer generated “hot list” of vehicle plates related to stolen vehicles, wanted vehicles, or other factors supporting investigation, or which has been manually registered by a user for further investigation.

Hot List – A list of license plates bearing some significance to law enforcement. The list is updated frequently through automated and manual processes and is considered intelligence information. It may be compiled from a variety of local, state, or federal resources.

Read – Digital images of license plates, vehicles, and associated metadata (e.g., date, time, and geographic coordinates associated with the image capture) that are captured by the ALPR system.

V. Administration

A. General

1. The department’s ALPR systems and associated data and media it captures are intended for use in conducting official business.

2. Accessing, copying, or releasing files or portions thereof, for non-law enforcement purposes is strictly prohibited unless otherwise required by law or authorized by the Chief of Police, Investigations Division Commander or designee.
 - a. Because such data contains confidential or intelligence information, personally protected information or linked to such, or may be protected by licensing agreements, it is only for use by the police department or other law enforcement agencies.
3. Only employees who have been trained in the use and operation of the ALPR systems shall be permitted to use it.
4. The Chief of Police or designee shall assign an employee(s) for administrative oversight of the ALPR systems. They shall be responsible for the following:
 - a. Ensure:
 - (1) Security and integrity of data, along with access, collection, storage, and retention of ALPR data follow this policy
 - (2) Equipment and software are maintained by trained personnel on a regular basis to ensure functionality
 - b. Maintain:
 - (1) User profiles for employees approved to operate or access the ALPR system
 - (2) An adequate number of trainers
 - (3) Records identifying approved fixed location ALPR deployments
 - c. Coordinate the authorization for any requests for ALPR systems use or data access according to this policy.
 - d. Perform regular audits of ALPR inquiries to ensure compliance with this policy and appropriate use of the ALPR systems.

VI. Operations

- A. ALPR operation and access to ALPR collected data may be used for investigations such as but not limited to:
 1. Persons who are subject to a valid arrest warrant
 2. Missing or endangered persons and AMBER Alerts
 3. Stolen vehicles and license plates, expired registrations
 4. Vehicles or persons who are of interest in a law enforcement investigation
 5. Sex offender registry violators
 6. Collection of overdue fines from habitual parking violators and enforcement of certain parking regulations
- B. Assignments
 1. When an officer who is trained in the use of the ALPR system is assigned an ALPR equipped vehicle for their normal tour of duty, the officer shall login to the related software and ensure it is operational while the vehicle is in use.
- C. Routine use
 1. An alert from the ALPR system is not in itself sufficient probable cause to stop a vehicle.
 2. If an officer chooses to act on an alert from the ALPR system, they shall first visually verify the plate number matches the number run by the ALPR system, including both the alphanumeric characters and the state of issuance. Upon verification of match, officers shall:
 - a. Validate the license plate alert through the appropriate law enforcement data systems such as the IOWA/LENCIR system, which may provide probable cause to stop the vehicle
 3. If an ALPR alert cannot be verified both visually and for validity, then officers should not act on the alert and it should be rejected.

- a. If the officer witnesses a violation of law or other action that establishes legal grounds for a stop, the officer may conduct a stop based on that action.
- 4. Officers should document in their reports, when reasonable, ALPR reads or alerts/hits that are used as the basis for initiating or furthering any investigation.
- 5. With supervisor approval, employees may be allowed to make manual additions to the Hot List for legitimate law enforcement related investigations and reasons.
 - a. Any manual addition shall have a documented reason within the entry for doing so.
 - b. Manual additions will be set to automatically purge after 30 days, unless a review determines the plate information entered is still active and appropriate based on the incident or investigation prompting the manual addition.
- D. Investigative use
 - 1. Employees who have received ALPR training may use ALPR data for investigative purposes.
 - a. When an employee queries the ALPR data, they shall enter all information required detailing the reason for the query.
 - 2. Employees may save any investigative queries, reads, or hits. When ALPR data is collaborated with a criminal investigation, that data becomes classified as evidence and shall be maintained as such.
 - a. Employees shall download and save such data in the case investigation file to prevent loss due to automatic ALPR system purging of the data.
 - 3. Officers may use an ALPR system to canvass an area to assist in criminal investigations.
 - a. This ALPR data may be saved separately to assist in the investigation.

VII. Dissemination of ALPR data

- A. General
 - 1. ALPR data may be shared outside the department for legitimate law enforcement purposes.
 - a. When an outside law enforcement agency makes such a request, the following information should be documented in the ALPR system:
 - (1) The person and agency making the request
 - (2) Their case number, if applicable
 - (3) Purpose for the request
 - 2. If ALPR data from another law enforcement agency or private vendor is shared with the department, the data will be treated consistent with this policy.

VIII. Retention

- A. General
 - 1. License plate scans and their associated data obtained by the department's own ALPR system will be retained for a period of 30 days or as otherwise required by law and thereafter will be purged unless specific license plate scans:
 - a. Have become, or it is reasonable to believe they will become, evidence in a criminal or civil action or are subject to a litigation hold
 - b. Are subject to a discovery request or other lawful order to produce or retain those scans
 - c. Have been approved by the Chief of Police or designee to retain longer