



Lincoln Police Department

Standard Operating Procedures

Integrity, Competency, Fairness



Subject:	License Plate Reader	Policy #	O-68
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<i>Rescinds All Previous Policies - Related To This Current Policy</i>			
Issuing Authority:	Chief of Police Lee Miller		

I. POLICY:

Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) is image-processing technology used to identify vehicles by their license plates. The availability and use of license plate reader systems (LPR) have provided many opportunities to enhance productivity, effectiveness, and officer and community safety. The Lincoln Police Department policy is that all members abide by the guidelines set forth herein when using LPR systems.

The use of ALPR equipment, including queries of system data from the ALPR server, shall be conducted for legitimate law enforcement purposes only, and conducted in a manner consistent with state and local law, the manufacturer's recommendations and this policy. Capturing or performing queries of license plate data without a legitimate law enforcement purpose is strictly prohibited and any employee engaging in unauthorized use of the system shall be subject to criminal, civil and/or administrative penalties.

II. PURPOSE:

This policy ensures the effective and responsible use of the Lincoln Police Department LPR system to enhance law enforcement operations, improve public safety, and protect individual privacy rights. The purpose is to establish guidelines for the training, deployment, maintenance, data storage, and associated use of fixed and/or mobile LPRs.

III. DEFINITIONS:

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

Alert: A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the LPR system receives a potential "hit" on a license plate.

Hit: A read matched to a plate previously registered on an agency's "hot list" of vehicle plates related to stolen vehicles, wanted vehicles, or other factors supporting an investigation, or which has been manually registered by an officer for further investigation.

Hot list: License plate numbers of stolen cars, vehicles owned by persons of interest, and vehicles associated with AMBER Alerts regularly added to "hot lists," which can be circulated among law enforcement agencies. Hot list information can come from various sources, including stolen vehicle information from the National Insurance Crime Bureau and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), as well as national AMBER Alerts and Department of Homeland Security watch lists. Departments of motor vehicles can provide lists of expired registration tags, and law enforcement agencies can

interface their own, locally compiled hot lists to the LPR system. These lists serve an officer safety function as well as an investigatory purpose. In addition to agency-supported hot lists, officers may also manually add license plate numbers to hotlists to be alerted if and when a vehicle license plate of interest is “read” by the LPR system. The hot list should be reviewed to ensure accuracy and avoid wrongful hits.

Fixed LPR system: LPR cameras permanently affixed to a structure, such as a pole, a traffic barrier, or a bridge. This does not include Maine’s photo-monitoring systems used for toll enforcement, as defined in *Title 23 MRSA § 1980.2-A.B (4)*.

Mobile LPR system: LPR cameras that are affixed, either permanently (hardwired) or temporarily (e.g., magnet-mounted), to a law enforcement vehicle for mobile deployment.

Portable LPR system: LPR cameras that are transportable and can be moved and deployed in a variety of venues as needed, such as a traffic barrel or speed radar sign.

IV. PROCEDURES:

A. General Guidelines for LPR Usage

1. The use of LPR systems is restricted to criminal investigations, public safety, and ensuring compliance with *Title 29-A MRSA § 2117-A.3(C)*. *(Any violation of this section is a Class E Crime)*.
2. LPR systems and associated equipment and databases are authorized for official public safety purposes. Misuse of this equipment and associated databases or data may result in disciplinary action.
3. LPR systems, data, and associated media are the property of the Lincoln Police Department and intended for use in conducting official business with limited exceptions noted elsewhere in this policy.
4. LPR data shall be considered confidential and can only be used for official law enforcement purposes or in relation to civil/criminal proceedings, in accordance with *Title 1 MRSA, Chapter 13* of Maine’s Freedom of Access Law.

B. Training

1. All employees shall have completed CJIS Security Awareness and Limited Access training prior to reviewing any collected LRP data
2. Only officers who have been properly trained in the use and operational protocols of the LPR systems shall be permitted to use it.
3. Refresher training will be required at least biennially to ensure compliance with this policy and procedures, to include the limitations under Maine state law (e.g., usage only for public safety, criminal investigations, or other law enforcement purposes as outlined in Maine law).

C. Administration

1. The Chief of Police is responsible for the following:
 - a. Establishing protocols for accessing, collecting, storing, and retaining LPR data and associated media files.
 - b. Establishing protocols to preserve and document LPR reads and “alerts” or “hits” that are acted on in the field or associated with investigations or prosecutions.
 - c. Establish protocols to ensure the security and integrity of data captured, stored, and/or retained by the LPR system.
 - d. Ensuring the proper selection of the personnel approved to operate the LPR system and maintaining an adequate number of trainees.
 - e. Maintaining records of approved LPR deployments and documenting their results, including appropriate documentation of significant incidents and arrests that are related to LPR usage.
 - f. Authorizing any requests for LPR systems use or data access according to this agency’s policies and guidelines.

2. Officers shall check LPR equipment daily to ensure functionality and camera alignment.
 - a. Any equipment that falls outside the expected functionality shall be reported in compliance with Lincoln Police Department policy *Maintenance and Accountability of Property and Equipment*.
 - b. The equipment will be removed from service until it is fixed.
 - c. LPR systems repairs, hardware or software, shall be made by agency-approved authorized services.

D. License Plate Reader System Usage

1. LPR operation and access to LPR collected data shall be for official agency purposes only and in compliance with Maine law.
2. At the start of each shift, officers must ensure that the LPR system has been updated with the most current hot lists.
3. LPR Alerts/Hits: Before initiating the stop:
 - a. Visually verify that the vehicle plate number matches the plate number run by the LPR system, including both alphanumeric characters of the license plate and the state of issuance.
 - b. Verify the plate's current status through dispatch or MDT query through NCIC or other legitimate law enforcement databases when circumstances allow.
4. In each case in which an alert or a hit is triggered, the user should record the disposition of the alert and the hit into the LPR system
5. Hot lists may be updated manually if the user enters a specific plate into the LPR system and wants to be alerted when that plate is located. Whenever a plate is manually entered into the LPR system, the officer should document the reason for entering the information.
6. Special Details: The administrator must approve LPR use during nontraditional deployments (e.g., special operations, or criminal investigations).
7. Historical data should be searched within the LPR system in accordance with established departmental policies and procedures.
8. If the LPR data provides probable cause that leads to an arrest or arrest warrant, the data shall be saved and transferred from the LPR data base to Evidence.com.

E. Privacy Protections

1. The Lincoln Police Department is committed to safeguarding individual privacy and data protection rights in compliance with federal and state law.
2. LPR systems shall only be used for public safety-related purposes. All efforts shall be made to minimize the collection and retention of data on individuals who are not suspected of criminal activity or wrongdoing.
3. No LPR data will be used for surveillance or tracking purposes without proper legal authorization, in accordance with Maine law's prohibition on LPR use for anything other than law enforcement, criminal investigation, or safety purposes.

F. LPR System Audit

1. The agency will audit the use of the LPR system monthly to ensure compliance with this policy and state law, particularly the restriction on use for public safety and criminal investigation only. It will also ensure the proper handling of confidential data in accordance with state confidentiality provisions.
2. Any officer with knowledge of the misuse of the LPR system with report it immediately to their supervisor.

G. LPR Data Sharing and Dissemination

LPR data should be considered "for official use only" and can be shared for legitimate law enforcement purposes:

1. LPR data are considered confidential under *Title 1 MRSA, Chapter 13 of Maine's Freedom of Access laws*, and may only be used by law enforcement agencies for their functions or related civil/criminal proceedings.
2. When LPR data are shared with an outside agency, it shall be documented in a secondary dissemination log, which is maintained by the Lincoln Police Department.
3. The agency may release summary reports using aggregate data (no individual data disclosed) to the public, as Maine law allows, and share commercial motor vehicle screening data with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration as required.
4. The agency will provide the public with annual updates on the use of LPR systems and data, including the number of hits, investigations initiated, and any data-sharing partnerships. Transparency reports may be available upon request.

H. Data Retention

1. LPR data will be retained for no more than **21 days** unless it is part of an ongoing investigation or meets the criteria for longer retention as outlined by law (e.g., intelligence or investigative records as per *Title 16 MRSA § 803 (7)*).
2. Data will be securely deleted after this period, unless retained for legitimate law enforcement purposes.