

Waltham Police Department
CHAPTER 60
AUTOMATIC LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION
(ALPR)

General Order #: GO-08 11/13/2025

Effective Date: 11/2025, 03/2026

Accreditation Standard #'s: 41.3.9

SCOPE AND AUTHORITY:

This Policy applies to all members of the Waltham Police Department who operate, access, or otherwise utilize Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) systems or data. This Policy is issued in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws, including the Massachusetts Fair Information Practices Act (M.G.L. c.66A), Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) Regulations, and the Massachusetts and United States Constitutions.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Policy is to establish clear, constitutional, and accountable guidelines and procedures for the proper use and application of ALPR systems, the management of the data, and the maintenance of the equipment.

The Waltham Police Department's use of ALPR data is solely to support legitimate law enforcement and public safety objectives, including detection, investigation, and prosecution of crimes, the recovery of stolen property, locating missing or endangered persons and other legitimate law enforcement functions consistent with constitutional protections.

POLICY:

The availability and use of ALPR systems have provided many opportunities for the enhancement of law enforcement agencies' productivity, effectiveness, and protection of public and officer safety. It is the policy of this Department to only utilize the technology in furtherance of official and legitimate law enforcement operations public safety. All members of this Department shall abide by the guidelines set forth when using ALPR systems.

1. DEFINITIONS:

- a. ALERT:** A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the ALPR system receives a potential hit on a license plate.

- b. **ALERT DATA:** Information captured by an ALPR relating to a license plate that matches the license plate on a hot list.
- c. **ALPR: Automatic License Plate Recognition** is a technology that uses high-speed cameras combined with sophisticated computer algorithms capable of converting the images of license plates to electronically readable data. The ALPR system captures an image of a license plate and converts it to a text file using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology. The technology also compares the digital images of license plates to the CJIS – NCIC (National Crime Information Center) Hot file database.
- d. **ALPR DATA:** Scan files, alert data generated by, or obtained through, utilization of the ALPR system.
- e. **ALPR DATA QUERY LOGS:** A record of a search or query of ALPR data.
- f. **ALPR SYSTEM:** The ALPR camera and all associated equipment and databases.
- g. **FIXED ALPR SYSTEM:** ALPR cameras that are permanently affixed to a structure, such as a pole, a traffic barrier, or a bridge.
- h. **HIT:** An alert that a license plate matches a record maintained in the ALPR database related to stolen vehicles, wanted vehicles, or other alert type files that support investigation or which have been manually registered by a user for further investigation.
- i. **HOT LIST:** License plate numbers of vehicles of interest, such as stolen vehicles, vehicles owned by persons of interest, and vehicles associated with Amber Alerts. Be On the Look Out (BOLO), Attempt to Locate (ATL), and Wanted or Missing Person broadcasts or bulletins in which a license plate number is included, or other license plate numbers of interest entered by the Department or an authorized officer.

2. **PROCEDURES:**

- a. **GENERAL:** ALPR systems and associated equipment and databases are the property of Flock Safety and authorized for official Department use only. Misuse of this equipment and associated databases or data may be subject to sanctions and or disciplinary actions, as determined by the rules, regulations, and policy of the Department.
- b. **ADMINISTRATION:** The Division Commander – Investigations Division is the ALPR Administrator for the ALPR system deployment, operations, and

maintenance. The ALPR Administrator or designee shall be responsible for the following:

1. Supervising the access, collection, storage, and retention of ALPR data and associated media files. The data is stored by the ALPR system owner for 30 days unless downloaded for investigative purposes
2. Utilize protocols to preserve and document ALPR reads and "alerts" or "hits" that are acted on in the field or associated with investigations or prosecutions.
3. Utilizing protocols to establish and ensure the security and integrity of data captured, stored, and/or retained by the ALPR system.
4. Authorizing any requests for ALPR systems use or data access according to the policies and guidelines of this agency.
5. Ensuring that the ALPR system owner abides by its contractual obligations to conduct system repairs and to ensure functionality and camera alignment and remove from service any equipment that falls outside expected functionality until deficiencies have been corrected.
6. Ensuring users are not using ALPR for personal reasons, to harass, intimidate, or for immigration enforcement.
7. Ensuring plates are only read while in the public view.
8. Ensuring the system or associated scan files are not used solely because of a person or group's class, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, nationality, ethnicity, disability, or other classification protected by law.

**c. AUTOMATIC LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION SYSTEM USAGE:
[41.3.9-A]**

1. ALPR systems and information shall be accessed and used only for official and legitimate law enforcement operations and public safety related purposes, and may only be used based on specific and articulable facts of a concern for safety, wrongdoing, criminal investigation, or pursuant to a court order.

2. Searches of historical ALPR data shall be done in accordance with established departmental policies and procedures.
3. Only users who have been designated by the ALPR Administrator and properly trained in the use and operational protocols of the ALPR system shall be permitted to use the system. Only those users with an approved login and password will be allowed access to the ALPR system.
4. The agency's ALPR Administrator shall ensure that any changes in hardware, software, policy that would impact the end user will be communicated to the department.
5. The installation of ALPR technology must be approved by the agency head or designee.
6. ALPR hot lists and data gathered by departmental ALPRs will be maintained securely in the ALPR system.
7. Requests for searches of ALPR data to the ALPR Administrator may be made by members of this Department or by other law enforcement agencies subject to the provisions of this Policy. **[41.3.9-A]**

d. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Any observed damage or misalignment or malfunction of the ALPR camera systems should be reported immediately to a supervisor. Damage in the field to a camera system should be documented and referred to the department administrator.
2. Department users should update hotlist as necessary. **[41.3.9-B]**

e. MANUAL ENTRY OF DATA:

1. Officers may request license plate numbers be entered into the Department hot list. Users may enter license plates only for official and legitimate law enforcement or public safety operations.
2. Manual entries may include, but should not be limited to, an Amber Alert, Missing Person, Be On the Look Out (BOLO), Attempt to Locate (ATL), or Wanted or Missing Person broadcast or bulletin in which a license plate number is included. Such manual entries must be manually updated when the information changes or is no longer current.

3. Whenever a plate is manually entered into the ALPR system, the officer shall document the reason. **[41.3.9-D]**

f. ALPR ALERTS/HITS:

Prior to initiation of a stop based on a hit or alert:

1. Users shall visually verify that the vehicle plate number matches the plate number run by the ALPR system, including both alphanumeric characters of the license plate and the state of issuance.
2. Users shall verify the status of the plate through the Commonwealth's Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS), National Crime Information Center (NCIC), Department's Records Management System (RMS), or other appropriate source of data prior to a stop when circumstances allow or as soon as practicable.

g. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT/SECURITY:

1. ALPR DATA QUERY LOGS:

- a. An automated log will be maintained for each transaction that will include the name of the individual accessing the data, along with the date and time of access.
- b. Requests to review stored ALPR data and search results will be recorded and maintained.
- c. ALPR data query logs shall be maintained and secured.
- d. Monthly audits of the ALPR system access, hit, and retained data shall be conducted by the Chief of Police.

2. ALPR DATA SHARING AND DISSEMINATION:

- a. ALPR data can be accessed, retrieved, or shared for official and legitimate law enforcement operations or public safety purposes only.
- b. Information sharing among law enforcement agencies, other than the DCJIS, is subject to approval by the ALPR Administrator and is governed by departmental policies.

- c. Information gathered or collected, and records retained by ALPR cameras or any other Waltham Police Department ALPR system will not be sold, accessed, shared, or used for any purpose other than legitimate law enforcement or public safety purposes. [41.3.9-E, F]

3. **RETENTION:**

- a. The ALPR administrator is responsible for ensuring systems and processes are in place for the proper collection and retention of ALPR data.
- b. ALPR system owners will purge their data at the end of the 30 days of storage. However, this will not preclude the Waltham Police Department from maintaining any relevant data obtained from the system after that period pursuant to the established state retention schedule or outlined elsewhere. [41.3.9-G]

4. **TRAINING:** The Department administrator of the ALPR system will receive initial administrative training through an ALPR system representative [41.3.9-C]. Any Officer who is authorized to become an ALPR user must complete ALPR training through the owner's online tutorials or other appropriate means. ALPR training system certificates should be saved to the WPD Share drive as well as logged into the Department training record within RMS.