



POLICY AND PROCEDURE NO. 586

License Plate Recognition (LPR) System

Date Issued: June 22, 2023

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4 Pages

1. INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this Department Order is to establish guidelines for officers utilizing the License Plate Recognition (LPR) system. The use of this system will assist officers in the locating and investigation of vehicles whose license plate information is flagged in a national/state/local database. This system is intended to aid law enforcement in the timely recovery of stolen vehicles, investigations of missing persons and abducted children, and also to identify vehicles of interest in major crimes investigations. This policy will further establish guidelines for the deployment and actions permissible when using the system.

2. DEFINITIONS:

LPR – License Plate Recognition System

Alert – An audible and/or visual signal activated upon the read of a license plate by the LPR system that has NOT BEEN VISUALLY VERIFIED by the officer against the photo in the LPR system.

Tentative Hit – An alert by the LPR system that HAS BEEN VISUALLY VERIFIED by the officer against the LPR hotlist and photo but HAS NOT BEEN VALIDATED by the officer or dispatch as a live query transaction OR CONFIRMED AS VALID with the original entering agency.

Live Query Transaction – A hit by the LPR system that HAS BEEN VALIDATED as active but HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED as valid by the entering agency.

Confirmation (Confirmed Hit) – A hit by the LPR system that HAS BEEN CONFIRMED as valid and active by the original entering agency through teletype via dispatch.

Hotlist – Data files extracted from the law enforcement databases which contain a listing of stolen license plates, stolen vehicles, wanted persons, and other vehicles/persons actively being sought by a law enforcement agency such as Amber/Silver Alert vehicles/persons. These data extracts are generally facilitated at numerous times per day in an effort to provide current data.

3. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION:

- a. The LPR camera system takes a digital photograph of every vehicle and license plate that enters its field of view. This digital image is then time stamped and GPS coded. It then searches a hotlist to see if the license plate is wanted for any reason.
- b. The LPR camera system does not conduct a live check against the source database. The system conducts a check of the hotlist database that is periodically downloaded throughout the day.
- c. The system then searches the hotlist for the license plate detected.

- d. The system currently downloads the hotlists on a regularly scheduled basis.
- e. The LPR camera system is unable to determine the type of license plate detected. For example, the system may detect tag 123ABC, but it cannot determine if the license plate is from another state/country.
- f. Every tentative hit by the LPR camera system must therefore be visually verified by the officer, and a live query transaction must be conducted before any contact is initiated.

NOTE: A “tentative hit” by the LPR camera system prior to a live query transaction by the officer or dispatch is not reasonable suspicion to conduct a stop of the vehicle.

- g. Every license plate detection is stored, per the retention policy set forth in this policy. This data is for use by the Agency in investigations, may be accessed only by trained users with a legitimate and permissible law enforcement purpose, and is classified “For Official Use Only” requires a case number for any query into the historical data.

4. TYPES OF QUERIES:

The LPR camera system is capable of conducting various types of queries that may include:

- NCIC warrant checks
- Persons checks
- Missing person checks
- Wanted persons
- Stolen vehicles
- Stolen license plates
- Protection orders (Domestic Violence Injunctions)
- Gang and terrorist watch lists
- Inmate release program

5. ADDITIONAL FEATURES OF THE SYSTEM:

Searches: The LPR camera system allows for searches to be run through the database by full license plate number, partial license plate number, time frame, mobile LPR unit identification number, and geographical boundary. Select personnel within the Agency (supervisors, detectives) will be trained and authorized to conduct searches of the LPR camera database for legitimate and permissible law enforcement purposes. These searches require a case number.

Flagged Vehicles: With the approval of a supervisor, detectives can request that the license plate of a vehicle of interest be entered into the LPR database for law enforcement purposes. This entry will be facilitated by those properly trained in this task. The entry will provide the license plate information, vehicle description, and what action to take if the vehicle license plate is scanned (such as stop and F.I., notify a specific officer/detective, do not stop/only monitor, etc.).

6. PATROL OFFICER’S PROCEDURES:

- a. Unless the officer has independent reasonable suspicion to make a stop, the officer SHALL NOT make any contact with the subject vehicle until the alert is verified as active through a live query.
- b. If the officer witnesses a violation of law or other action that establishes reasonable suspicion for a stop, the officer may conduct a stop based on that reasonable suspicion.
- c. Upon receiving an LPR alert the officer shall perform a visual verification that the license plate image captured on the LPR system exactly matches the license plate characters and issuing state. The officer will also verify that this information exactly matches the alert information provided on screen as retrieved from the current LPR hotlist.
- d. The officer shall then perform a live query transaction on this license plate to verify that the information that produced the tentative alert is correct and active. This live query transaction may be accomplished via dispatch or through the use of the live query software on the officer's laptop computer.
- e. Upon confirmation that the license plate information is active in a live query transaction the officer may initiate appropriate law enforcement action as determined by the information available from the source database. As soon as practical, the officer shall confirm the teletype entry status with the original entering agency.

7. DATABASE ACCESS AND RECORDS RETENTION:

- a. The LPR system database resides on a local computer server that is operated and maintained by the City of Worcester's Technical Services Division. The data remains property of the Agency, and is managed according to the Agency's data sharing and retention policies. This database houses the current hotlists as well as the license plate scans that are uploaded from the camera systems. The plate scans consist of an image of the vehicle, a close-up view of the license plate, as well as GPS location and date/time of scan. These images are sorted by the software as either reads or hits. Hits refer to scans that have generated a possible match with one of the active hotlists at the time of the scan. Reads are scans that are captured but which did not produce a match or "hit" from the hotlist.
- b. The collected LPR data contains no Personally Identifiable Information (PII) that may be used to connect a license plate detection to an individual. It is only with permissible purpose that an investigator may make this connection (using other systems) and this access is governed by the Federal Driver's Privacy Protection Act (DPPA).
- c. All investigative queries into collected LPR data are logged by user and available for auditing and review by the Agency. Any perceived policy violation or other misuse of the system will result in appropriate disciplinary action including possible termination and legal action.
- d. The retention period for all scans will be 60 (sixty) days. After 60 days the data is over written. This retention period allows access, per the protocol and permissions established in this policy as well as the Federal DPPA, to this data for assistance in major crimes investigations.

- e. The database may be accessed for law enforcement purposes only. Users will be trained in the use of the system which can search the database for specific license plates, partial license plates, geographic areas, and time frames.

Per:

Steven M. Sargent
Chief of Police

Revisions:

Revision 1. December 8, 2015 retention from 365 to 60 Days

Revision 2. June 22, 2023. Section 3, Subsection F, Note portion amended from probable cause to reasonable suspicion.