GREENVILLE COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

GO - 156

GENERAL ORDERS

Automatic License Plate Reader

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to provide officers with guidelines on the proper use of automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) systems, also commonly known as license plate reader systems.

DEFINITIONS:

FOUO: For Official Use Only
ALPR: Automatic License Plate Recognition/License Plate Reader
OCR*:* Optical Character Recognition
Read*:* Digital images of license plates and vehicles and associated metadata (e.g., date, time, and geographic coordinates associated with the vehicle image capture) that are captured by the ALPR system.
Alert: A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the ALPR system receives a potential "hit" on a license plate.
Hit: A read matched to a plate that has previously been registered on an agency's "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*:* License plate numbers of stolen cars, vehicles owned by persons of interest, and vehicles associated with AMBER Alerts that are regularly added to "hot lists" circulated among law enforcement agencies. Hot list information can come from a variety of 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 ALPR system. These lists serve an officer safety function as well as an investigatory purpose. In addition to agency supported hot lists, users may also manually add license plate numbers to hot lists in order to be alerted if and when a vehicle license plate of interest is "read" by the ALPR system.
Fixed ALPR system*:* ALPR cameras that are permanently affixed to a structure: such as a pole, a traffic barrier, or a bridge.
Mobile ALPR system*:* ALPR cameras that are affixed, either permanently (hardwired) or temporarily (e.g., magnet-mounted), to a law enforcement vehicle for mobile deployment.
Portable LPR system*:* ALPR cameras that are transportable and can be moved and deployed in a variety of venues as needed, including, but not limited to, traffic barrel or speed radar sign.

POLICY:

The availability and use of ALPR systems have provided many opportunities for the enhancement of productivity, effectiveness, identifying criminals in Real-Time, and officer safety. It is the policy of this agency that all personnel abide by the guidelines set forth herein when using ALPR systems, including owned, leased, and subscription-based ALPR.

Any ALPR purchased by the agency shall be connected to the Intel Unit. ALPRs owned by a community member may be connected to the Intel Unit after signing a permission form. All permission forms shall be scanned and retained by the Intel Unit Commander. Any ALPR placed on private property shall have a permission form completed before any device installation.

Due to an ALPR's connection to NCIC, access shall be limited to members of law enforcement agencies. Hot lists and plate tracking can be maintained either by the Intel Unit or through a member's individual account. All plates included in a hotlist shall be based on legitimate investigative needs and be labeled with an Incident Number and Incident Type.

A. GENERAL

1. The use of ALPR systems is restricted to public safety–related missions of this agency.

2. ALPR systems and associated equipment and databases are authorized for official public safety purposes. Misuse of this equipment and associated databases, or data, may be subject to sanctions and/or disciplinary actions.

3. ALPR systems and ALPR data and associated media are the property of this agency and intended for use in conducting official business with limited exceptions noted elsewhere in this policy.

B. ADMINISTRATION

1. The agency shall designate an employee(s) with administrative oversight for ALPR system deployment and operations who is (are) responsible for the following:
   a. Establishing protocols for access, collection, storage, and retention of ALPR data and associated media files
   b. Establishing protocols to preserve and document ALPR reads and "alerts" or "hits" that are acted on in the field or associated with investigations or prosecutions

c. Establishing protocols to establish and ensure the security and integrity of data captured, stored, and/or retained by the ALPR system
d. Ensuring the proper selection of the personnel approved to operate the ALPR system and maintaining an adequate number of trainees;
e. Maintaining records identifying approved ALPR deployments and documenting their results, including appropriate documentation of significant incidents and arrests that are related to ALPR usage
f. Authorizing any requests for LPR systems use or data access according to the policies and guidelines of this agency

2. Designated, trained personnel shall check equipment on a regular basis to ensure functionality and camera alignment. Any equipment that falls outside expected functionality shall be removed from service until deficiencies have been corrected.

3. ALPR systems repairs, hardware or software, shall be made by agency authorized sources.

B. LICENSE PLATE READER SYSTEM USAGE

1. ALPR operation and access to ALPR collected data shall be for official agency purposes only.

2. Only officers who have been properly trained in the use and operational protocols of the ALPR systems shall be permitted to use it.

3. At the start of each shift users must ensure that the ALPR system has been updated with the most current hot lists available.

4. ALPR Alerts/Hits: Prior to initiation of the stop:
a. 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.
b. Verify the current status of the plate through dispatch or MDT query when circumstances allow.

5. 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 ALPR system if enforcement action is attempted or taken.

6. 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 ALPR system, the officer should document the reason.

7. Special Details: ALPR use during nontraditional deployments (e.g., special operations or during a criminal investigation) must be approved by the administrator.

8. Searches of historical data within the ALPR system should be done in accordance with established departmental policies and procedures.

D. LPR DATA SHARING AND DISSEMINATION

ALPR data should be considered FOUO and can be shared for legitimate law enforcement purposes:

1. Information sharing among agencies should be dictated in accordance with MOUs (memoranda of understanding) or established departmental policies.

HOT LIST:

Any hotlist created by a department member shall contain in the reason box:

a. Case Number
b. Incident type and brief description for entry
c. Contact name and information

Intel Unit Personnel will conduct an audit of all hotlists on a bi-weekly basis. Any hotlist not containing the required information shall be removed. Validation of all hotlists shall occur during the audit. Any entry inquiry that doesn't receive a response within the required time shall be removed. Any department members who routinely make faulty entries shall have their ALPR account(s) restricted pending additional training. Restricting of an account shall occur after a review by the Intel Unit Commander.

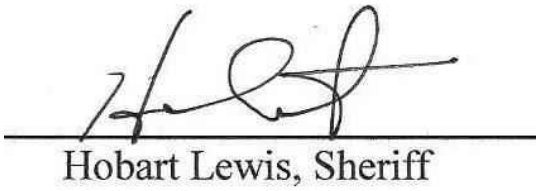
RETENTION:

ALPR captures by agency owned or leased cameras shall not be retained longer than 30 days unless needed for a criminal investigation or prosecution.

Any hot list created by a department member shall be immediately removed when no longer needed and/or reviewed every two weeks for relevance.

ENFORCEMENT ACTION: All users of the ALPR systems shall verify any received alert through NCIC prior to taking enforcement action.

EXTERNAL SHARING /ACCESS REMOVAL: Any external sharing, or removal of access, of ALPR plate reads to other law enforcement agencies shall be at the discretion of the Intel Unit Commander or higher.



Hobart Lewis, Sheriff