

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)

429.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the capture, storage and use of digital data obtained through the use of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology.

429.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) System - A computer based system that utilizes special cameras to capture a color image, as well as an infrared image, of the license plate of a passing vehicle. The infrared image is converted into a text file utilizing Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology. The text file is automatically compared against an "information data file" (i.e., Hot List) containing information on stolen or wanted vehicles as well as vehicles associated with AMBER alerts, warrant subjects or other criteria.

CLETS - California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System.

429.1.2 PROCEDURES

[Procedures Manual: 429.1 AUTOMATIC LICENSE PLATE READER PROCEDURES](#)

429.2 POLICY

It is the policy of this department to establish a procedure for the use of an ALPR system. The intent of this policy is to create procedures to protect the information collected and identify the authorized uses of the ALPR system.

429.3 ADMINISTRATION

The ALPR technology provides a manner in which vehicle license plates can be automatically scanned by a computer from a moving vehicle or a fixed location. If the license plate is a match and comes up wanted, the system will alert the officer with both an audible and visible alert.

Images of the license plate and vehicle, as well as a brief explanation of what the vehicle is wanted for will be displayed. The entire process is automatic and takes less than a second.

The ALPR system has the capability to capture quality images in a variety of settings, including darkness, oncoming headlights, bright sunlight, low sunlight, deep shadows and glare. The system has the capability to capture the license plate while capturing a color overview image of the vehicle associated with the plate. The system has the capability to allow authorized personnel to search for previously read plates and retrieve a GPS time stamped photo of each read plate. The system also has the capability to allow read plates to be plotted on a map for analysis.

The ALPR system will not read all license plates. The system only reads plates that it can detect with its cameras. License plates must be in the field of view of the camera and in the infrared color spectrum. Specifically, in order to read the plate, it must have reflective characteristics. Older blue California plates and extremely dirty, mutilated or obscured plates may not be readable. Out of state and motorcycle plates can be read, but accuracy may be reduced.

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Once a license plate is detected by the ALPR system as being wanted or matching the Hot List, an officer must visually verify the license plate on the vehicle matches what was scanned by the ALPR system and confirm its wanted status through CLETS. **The wanted vehicle database is not real-time and this step is necessary to confirm the vehicle is still wanted and the plate was properly read.**

All traffic enforcement stops related to ALPR system hits shall be done in accordance with the Vehicle Pursuit Policy.

429.4 DATA COLLECTION AND RETENTION

The information collected by the ALPR system should be stored for a minimum of one year (Government Code § 34090.6) and shall be maintained for two years. Thereafter, ALPR data should be purged unless it has become, or it is reasonable to believe it will become, evidence in a criminal or civil action or is subject to a discovery request or other lawful action to produce records. In those circumstances the applicable data should be downloaded from the server onto portable media and booked into evidence. This information includes Hot List data which must be manually deleted by the user at the conclusion of their investigation. The retention period for ALPR data should be reevaluated every two years.

This information may be queried only for use in official law enforcement investigations or department-related civil or administrative action. Access to the raw ALPR database is restricted to approved personnel with assigned passwords. Approved personnel include sworn staff with current CLETS clearance and a need to access ALPR data, and staff from the Technology Services Unit who are responsible for installing and maintaining ALPR related equipment. This information is classified as "Law Enforcement Sensitive" and shall not be released to the public except pursuant to Government Code § 6253. If a user does not log into their account for 90 days, the account will automatically be deactivated. When an employee is no longer employed by the Department, their account will immediately be closed. For access to the ALPR system, the requestor must send an email to the sergeant overseeing the Auto Theft Task Force.

Inquiries in the ALPR database shall include a case number or incident number, as well as a valid reason for accessing the database. This information will be used for auditing purposes.

Hot Plates uploaded into the ALPR database for comparison should include the vehicle license plate number and the reason it was added as a Hot Plate. Hot Plate data shall not include names, address or information obtained through CLETS data.

429.5 RELEASING ALPR DATA

The ALPR data may be shared only with other law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies for official law enforcement purposes or as otherwise permitted by law, using the following procedure:

- The agency shall make a request through the Vigilant Share Request system which will include the name of the agency and of the person making the request.

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- The agency shall be verified as a law enforcement or prosecutorial agency with a need to know the information.
- The request shall be reviewed and approved by the Auto Theft Sergeant or the authorized designee.
- The approval request will be documented and retained in a local Excel file.

429.6 AUDITS

The Vehicle Theft Investigator for the Department will be the ALPR Program Manager. The Program Manager will be responsible for creating approved accounts and managing ALPR data and user/data query audits.

Audits will be conducted once a year for indications of inappropriate or unusual activity. Data to be audited will include User Logins, and categories related to Hit List Browsing, Hot List Browsing, Hot List Upload, Hot Plate Upload, Hot List Delete, Hot Plate Delete, and Stakeout Browsing. If a violation is suspected, it will be reported to the sergeant overseeing the Auto Theft Task Force for further investigation. Audit records shall be retained for at least two years. Once the minimum retention time period has passed, the Department shall continue to retain audit records until it is determined they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit or other operational purposes. This includes, for example, retention and availability of audit records relative to the California Public Records Act (CPRA), Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, subpoena and law enforcement actions.