AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION (ALPR)

POLICY

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

DEFINITION

AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION (ALPR) SYSTEM is 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" containing information on stolen or wanted vehicles as well as vehicles associated with AMBER alerts, warrant subjects, or other criteria.

PROCEDURE

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.

It should be noted that the ALPR system will not read all license plates. The system only reads plates that it "sees." 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.

Once a license plate is detected by the ALPR system as being wanted, an officer must visually verify the license plate on the vehicle 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 will follow the Marin County Sheriff's Department Emergency Vehicle Regulations General Order (PAT 02-04).

The information collected by the ALPR system shall be maintained for a minimum of two years and may be queried only for use in official law enforcement investigations. Access to the raw ALPR database is restricted to approved personnel with assigned passwords. This information is classified as "Law Enforcement Sensitive" and shall not be released to the public except pursuant to Government Code Section 6253.

The assigned Vehicle Theft Investigator for the Department will be the ALPR program manager. He/She will be responsible for controlling access to ALPR data and user/data query audits.

RELATED STANDARDS
PAT– 02-04

AFFECTED DIVISIONS
Patrol
Investigations
Task Force

By Order Of

ROBERT T. DOYLE
Sheriff-Coroner