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.

DEFINITIONS

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, before taking enforcement action, an officer must visually verify the license plate on the vehicle and confirm it is
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. To be approved, a request shall be emailed to the assigned Vehicle Theft Investigator for the Department. They will be required to review this policy and the training material for the ALPR systems. The password will be required to be updated every 90 days. If an account is not accessed for one year, it will automatically be closed. This information is classified as “Law Enforcement Sensitive” and shall not be released to the public except pursuant to Government Code Section 6253. Personnel will be required to provide an authorized purpose for accessing data. ALPR data downloaded to a mobile workstation and in storage shall be accessible only through a login/password-protected system capable of documenting all access information by name, date, and time (Civil Code section 1798.90.52).

The data generated by the ALPR system shall not be sold, shared, or transferred except to another public agency, and only as otherwise permitted by law (Civil Code Section 1798.90.55).

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

DATE OF REVISIONS:

2-23-12

By order of:

ROBERT T. DOYLE
SHERIFF