

DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 13-06

OFFICE of the CHIEF OF POLICE
REPLACES: N/A

DATE: July 25, 2013

AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION

I. PURPOSE.

To establish uniform procedural guidelines to be used by department personnel in the deployment of the Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR, or LPR for short) unit. The use of Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) is intended to provide law enforcement personnel with an automated method of identifying vehicles and license plates. The ALPR scans license plates and compares them to the data provided by the Missouri Department of Revenue through the REJIS computer database system. The ALPR software automatically alerts the operator to potentially stolen vehicles or license plates, suspended driver's licenses, Wanted Vehicles and Drivers affiliated with a particular license plate, AMBER and SARAH Alerts, Terrorist Watch List, , as well as Departmental lists (Parking Scofflaws, etc.). The ALPR maintains the date, time, and location of each license plate scanned.

II. DEFINITIONS.

1. Automated License Plate Recognition -- 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 "informational data file" containing information on stolen or wanted vehicles as well as vehicles associated with AMBER alerts, warrant subjects or other criteria. If a match is found, the user is notified of the vehicle "hit" by an audible alert and an associated notation on the user's computer screen.

2. Hot List -- also known as "hit list." A database populated with items of specific concern to the investigative and/or enforcement interests of law enforcement. This may

include, but is not limited to, Terrorist Screening Center Watch List, stolen/wanted vehicles and license plates, wanted and missing persons, cautions, and license plates associated with AMBER Alerts or various watch lists provided for law enforcement purposes.

3. Download -- transfer of data from the Missouri State Highway Patrol and REJIS database consisting of license plate associated data.
4. Alarm -- aka "Hit" -- a positive indication, by visual and/or audible signal, of a potential match between data on the "hot list" and a license plate scanned by the ALPR system. A hit is NOT conclusive confirmation that a license plate is wanted and additional investigation is always warranted when a hit is indicated.
5. ALPR Generated Data -- all information, including location, date and time of a license plate encounter and any ALPR generated digital photographic image(s) of the license plate and vehicle generated entirely through the use of, and by, the ALPR equipment.
6. ALPR Coordinator – Employee (generally a Patrol Lieutenant) charged with administration, troubleshooting, training, repairing and coordinating all aspects of the LPR systems for the Police Department.

The ALPR Coordinator shall have administrative oversight for the ALPR system deployment and operations and is responsible for the following:

- a. Establishing protocols for access, collection, storage, and retention of ALPR databases and associated data.
- 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 ensure the security and integrity of data captured, stored, and/or retained by the ALPR system.
- d. Ensuring compliance with the terms of any M.O.U. (memoranda of understanding with other agencies/entities) associated with ALPR systems.
- e. Designate trained personnel to check equipment on a regular basis to ensure functionality and camera alignment. Equipment that falls outside expected functionality shall not be used and shall be removed from service until the ALPR system is tested and repaired if necessary.
- f. Ensuring ALPR systems diagnostics and repairs, hardware or software, shall be made by Department authorized sources.
- g. Shall coordinate training, service, repair and replacement of the LPR systems and software.
- h. Shall maintain the current LPR software and apply updates as needed.
- i. Shall coordinate the installation of the LPR software on the computers that the LPR operators use.

7. LPR / ALPR Operator – A properly trained user of the ALPR systems.

III. PROCEDURES.

A. All operators shall receive training prior to using the ALPR system.

B. Pending the future restructuring of the ALPR system to utilize automated downloads through Wi-Fi and/or Air Card based computer connections, the following manual download processing protocol will be followed:

The ALPR unit will be assigned a dedicated flash drive. The sole purpose of the dedicated flash drive is for transferring "hot list" files from the VSP website to the LPR system computer. No other files, documents, photographs, or recordings shall be saved on the dedicated flash drive. In the event of loss or damage to the dedicated flash drive a replacement shall be obtained from the ALPR Coordinator. No other type of media storage device shall be used to transfer data in lieu of the dedicated flash drive. If the agency acquires the capability to update the mobile terminals wirelessly, the flash drives will be retained as a back-up for data transfer. The flash drive will be treated with the same level of care as any other Departmental equipment, including protecting it from theft, loss, destruction, or unauthorized access or disclosure.

C. It is the responsibility of each ALPR user to download the current "hot list" from the MSHP and REJIS secure website prior to the deployment of the ALPR equipment. It is the responsibility of the operator to ensure the most current "hot list" available has been transferred into the LPR prior to its use.

D. Upon receiving an alarm, the ALPR operator should utilize whatever information is available to determine the accuracy of the "hit." The ALPR operator will visually verify the particular tag and the actual read on the ALPR screen are the same, i.e. from the same State, etc. The operator will confirm the "hit" is still active by running the information through NCIC/MULES/REJIS via ECDC or in car computer. Receipt of an ALPR alarm is NOT sufficient probable cause to warrant an arrest without additional verification.

E. Upon receipt of an alarm, the ALPR operator will use established procedures in taking enforcement action based on the seriousness of the offense.

F. Additional information may be entered into the ALPR system at any time. Broadcast information received following the initial download should be manually entered immediately upon receipt by the ALPR operator. The reason for the entry shall be included in the "note" portion of the entry screen, i.e. stolen vehicle, missing person, abduction, Amber Alert, robbery suspect, etc.

It is the responsibility of the person entering the information to remove the information once it no longer serves a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

G. Upon completing the manual entry, the operator should query the ALPR data to determine if the license plate was scanned previously.

H. Positive hits by the ALPR leading to action requiring an incident report shall be documented within the report narrative.

1. If an operator verifies a hit as being accurate, the operator shall take appropriate action in accordance with Department policy and procedure.
2. In each case in which a hit is received, the operator should record the disposition of the hit into the ALPR system by selecting either "Accept" or "Misread".

I. ALPR systems are primarily used for the identification of stolen vehicles, stolen license plates, and wanted and missing persons. It is the policy of the Department that ALPR systems will be utilized only by sworn employees or by authorized administrators who are trained in the use of ALPR systems.

No employee shall use or authorize the use of ALPR database records for reasons that are not legitimate law enforcement purposes. Misuse of this equipment and associated databases, or data, may result in disciplinary action.

J. Searches of historical ALPR data within the ALPR system database shall be conducted in accordance with established departmental policies and procedures.

K. ALPR Data Sharing and Dissemination

Both active ALPR data and historical ALPR data should be considered "for official use only" and can be shared for legitimate law enforcement purposes:

ALPR / LPR Operators:

1. LPR operators shall receive training prior to using the LPR system.
2. Employees shall exercise safety when operating the LPR system. Use of the device during the operation of a motor vehicle must comply with current state law. Employees will pay careful attention to driving and will not use the LPR system in any manner that would endanger or distract them, resulting in an accident.
3. It shall be the responsibility of each LPR operator to download the hot list and install it on the mobile computer prior to deployment of the LPR equipment. It shall also be the responsibility of the user to ensure the most recent hot list has been transferred to the LPR car system software.
 - a. Until other methods are developed, the hot list download will be completed by using removable media in accordance with procedures designated by the LPR Coordinator.
4. The LPR system works passively and will continue to read license plates and sound alarms even when other programs are being used on the computer. When using an LPR-equipped vehicle, the LPR operators should have the system in operation so as to maximize the opportunity to scan a vehicle on the hot list.

5. LPR operators will enter additional information entered into the LPR system as needed.

a. Broadcast and “be on the lookout” (BOLO) information received following the initial download should be manually entered immediately upon receipt by the LPR operator.

C. Supervisors and Commanders:

1. Supervisors and commanders will monitor the use of LPR systems and ensure that they are being deployed regularly. Whenever possible, the LPR systems should be assigned to beats or assignments that maximize their ability to scan many license plates.

IV. DEPLOYMENT.

A. ALPR equipped vehicles may be used in a routine patrol capacity or for special operations. They should NOT, however be intentionally used in a manner or location that will increase the risk of damage to or by ALPR equipment, such as, civil disturbance situations.

B. Operation of ALR equipped vehicles shall be in accordance with the agency's policies regarding the operation of police vehicles.

C. Supervisors should make every effort to deploy ALPR equipped vehicles on a regular basis.

V. DATA RETENTION

ALPR equipment has the capability to store and/or cause to store data collected during the license plate detection and identification phase of use. ALPR generated data may be stored in a central database for investigative purposes.

Stored Data will only be shared with agencies having a legitimate law enforcement/public safety need to have access to this information.

There are currently no federal or state laws mandating a maximum length of time for retention of ALPR data storage. At this time data will be stored for an unlimited time in accordance with the storage capacity of the current computer server and other mechanical limits.

A. When data is provided to another agency, a log documenting the description of data disseminated, date and time the information was released; the identity of the person including contact information and the name of their organization, and the purpose for the request shall be maintained.

B. In a case-by-case basis, there may be instances where images of vehicles and/or occupants may pose an urgent need or threat to the general public. In such cases, the Chief of Police or his designee shall authorize the release of this information through the news media or other means to the public.

C. Data collected by an LPR shall be safeguarded against inappropriate or unauthorized disclosure or access.

B. LPR-generated data may be stored on the mobile computer for up to 30 days.

1. The department does not currently have infrastructure or storage for supporting LPR-generated data submissions from the LPR systems to a central repository.
2. Should the data infrastructure and storage be implemented in the future, LPR generated data will be held in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and Local/Department laws and guidelines.

VI. MAINTENANCE

A. Under no conditions should an ALPR operator attempt to modify the ALPR equipment or software operating system without permission from the ALPR coordinator.

B. ALPR camera lenses may be cleaned with glass cleaner or mild soap and water and a soft, nonabrasive cloth.

C. Damage to ALPR equipment shall be immediately reported to a supervisor. The supervisor shall document and investigate if necessary, the damage in accordance with established policies on agency owned equipment.

D. The ALPR coordinator shall be notified of any ALPR equipment needing maintenance or repair. The coordinator will coordinate all maintenance and repair with the appropriate ALPR vendor. The vehicle does not need to be removed from service once the damaged or malfunctioning ALPR is secured or removed from the vehicle.

D. Anytime the ALPR unit is disconnected, un-mounted or removed from the vehicle, it shall be placed in the protective storage case and secured to prevent further damage.

E. According to the manufacturer, the ELSAG ALPR unit may remain in place when driving the car through the car wash. Officers should, however, check upon completion of the washing process the cameras are still aligned and do not appear damaged.

BY ORDER OF:

THOMAS J. BYRNE
Chief of Police

TJB:dpb