

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)

462.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Best Practice

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.

462.2 POLICY

Best Practice MODIFIED

The policy of the Los Altos Police Department is to utilize ALPR technology to capture and store digital license plate data and images while recognizing the established privacy rights of the public.

All data and images gathered by the ALPR are for the official use of this department. Such data is not open to public view, as it may contain confidential information. [The Los Altos Police Department does not permit the sharing of ALPR data gathered by the City or its subcontractors for the purpose of federal immigration enforcement, pursuant to the California Values Act \(Government Code 7282.5: Government Code 7284.2 et seq\) - these federal immigration agencies include Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\) and Customs and Border Patrol \(CBP\).](#)

462.3 ADMINISTRATION

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The ALPR technology, also known as License Plate Recognition (LPR), allows for the automated detection of license plates [along with the vehicle make, model, color and unique identifiers through the Los Altos Police Department's ALPR system and the vendor's vehicle identification technology.](#) It is used by the Los Altos Police Department to convert data associated with vehicle license plates for official law enforcement purposes, including identifying stolen or wanted vehicles, stolen license plates and missing persons. It may also be used to gather information related to active warrants, homeland security, electronic surveillance, suspect interdiction and stolen property recovery.

All installation and maintenance of ALPR equipment, as well as ALPR data retention and access, shall be managed by the [Administrative Captain](#). Administration Division Commander. The Administration Division Commander [Administrative Captain](#) will assign members under his/her command to administer the day-to-day operation of the ALPR equipment, and data [access. The Custodian of Records will be responsible for data retention in accordance with applicable law.](#) -

462.3.1 ALPR ADMINISTRATOR

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The Administration Division Commander [Administrative Captain](#) shall be responsible for [compliance with the requirements of](#) Civil Code § 1798.90.5 et seq. This includes, but is not limited to (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53):

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- (a) Ensuring that only properly trained sworn police officers, crime analysts and communication dispatchers are allowed access to the ALPR system or to collect ALPR information.
- (b) ~~A description of the job title or other designation of the members and independent contractors who are authorized to use or access the ALPR system or to collect ALPR information.~~
- (c) Ensuring that training requirements are completed for all authorized users.
- (d) ALPR system monitoring to ensure the security of the information and compliance with applicable privacy laws
- (e) ~~A description of how the ALPR system will be monitored to ensure the security of the information and compliance with applicable privacy laws.~~
- (f) ~~Procedures for system operators to maintain records of access in compliance with Civil Code § 1798.90.52.~~
- (g) Ensuring that procedures are followed for system operators and to maintain records of access in compliance with Civil Code 1798.90.52.
- (h) ~~The title and name of the current designee in overseeing the ALPR operation.~~
- (i) Continually working with the Custodian of Records on retention and destruction of ALPR data.
- (j) ~~Working with the Custodian of Records on the retention and destruction of ALPR data.~~
- (k) Ensuring this policy and related procedures are conspicuously posted on the department's website.

462.4 OPERATIONS

State **MODIFIED**

Use of an ALPR is restricted to the purposes outlined below. Department members shall not use, or allow others to use the equipment or database records for any unauthorized purpose (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53).

- (a) An ALPR shall only be used for official law enforcement business.
- (b) An ALPR may be used in conjunction with any routine patrol operation or criminal investigation. Reasonable suspicion or probable cause is not required before using an ALPR.
- (c) ~~While an~~ ALPR may be used to canvass license plates around any crime scene, ~~particular consideration should be given to using ALPR-equipped cars to canvass areas around homicides, shootings and other major incidents.~~ Partial license plates and unique vehicle descriptions reported during major crimes should be entered into the ALPR system in an attempt to identify suspect vehicles.
- (d) No member of this department shall operate ALPR equipment or access ALPR data without first completing department-approved training.

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- (e) Login/log out procedure. To ensure proper operation and facilitation of oversight of the ALPR system, all users will be required to have individual credentials for access and use of the systems and/or data, which has the ability to be fully audited.
- (f) No ALPR operator may access department, state or federal data unless otherwise authorized to do so.
- (g) If practicable, the officer should verify an ALPR response through the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) before taking enforcement action that is based solely on an ALPR alert. Once an alert is received, the operator should confirm that the observed license plate from the ALPR system matches the license plate of the observed vehicle. Before any law enforcement action is taken due to an ALPR alert, the alert will be verified through a CLETS inquiry via MDC or through dispatch. Members will not take any police action that restricts the freedom of any individual based solely on an ALPR alert unless it has been validated.
- (h) Hot Lists- designation of hot lists to be utilized by the ALPR system shall be made by the ALPR Administrator or her/his designee. Occasionally, there may be errors in the LPR's system's read of a license plate. Therefore, an alert alone shall not be a basis for police action (other than following the vehicle of interest). Prior to initiation of a stop of a vehicle or other intervention based on an alert, Los Altos Police Department members shall undertake the following steps:
 - 1.) Verification of status on a Hot List. An officer must receive confirmation from a communications dispatcher or other department computer device, that the license plate is still stolen, wanted or otherwise of interest before proceeding (absent exigent circumstances)
 - 2. Visual verification of license plate number. Officers shall visually verify that the license plate of interest matches identically with the image of the license plate number captured (read) by the LPR, including both the alphanumeric characters of the license plate, state of issuance, and vehicle descriptors before proceeding. Officers alerted to the fact that an observed motor vehicle's license plate is entered as a "Hot plate" or "hit" in a specific BOLO (be on the lookout) list are required to make a reasonable effort to confirm that a wanted person is actually in the vehicle and/or that a reasonable basis exists before a Department member would have a lawful basis to stop the vehicle.
 - 3. Department members will clear all stops from hot list alerts by indicating the positive ALPR hit, i.e. with an arrest or other enforcement action. If it is not obvious in the text of the call as to the correlation of the ALPR hit and the arrest, then the Department member shall update the Communications Dispatcher.
 - 4. General Hot Lists will be automatically downloaded into the ALPR system a minimum of once a day with the most current data overwriting the old data.
 - 5. All entries and updates of specific Hot Lists within the ALPR system will be documented by the requesting Department member within the appropriate general offense report. - Hot Lists shall be approved by the ALPR Administrator (or her/his designee) before initial entry within the ALPR system. The updating of such a list within the ALPR system shall thereafter be accomplished pursuant to the approval of the Department member's immediate supervisor. The hits from

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these data sources should be viewed as informational: created solely to bring the officers attention to specific vehicles that have been associated with criminal activity or missing persons. .

All Hot Plates and suspect information entered into the ALPR system will contain the following information at a minimum- Department member's name, related case number and a short synopsis describing the nature of the originating call for service.

Permitted?impermissible Uses. The ALPR system, and all data collected, is the property of the Los Altos Police Department. Department personnel may only access and use the ALPR system for official and legitimate law enforcement purposes consistent with this policy. The following uses of the ALPR system are specifically prohibited:

1.) Invasion of Privacy: Except when done pursuant to a court order such as a search warrant, it is a violation of this policy to utilize the ALPR system to record license plates except those of vehicles that are exposed to the public view (e.g., vehicles on a public road or street, or that are on private property but whose license plate (s) are visible from a public road, street or a place to which members of the public have access, such as the parking lot of a shop or other business establishment).

2.) Harassment or Intimidation: It is a violation of this policy to use the ALPR system to harass and/or intimidate any individual or group.

3.) Use based on a protected characteristic: It is a violation of this policy to use the ALPR system or associated files or Hot Lists solely because of a person's or group's race, gender, gender identity, religion, political affiliation, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age or other classification protected by law.

4.) Personal Use: It is a violation of this policy to use the ALPR system or associated files or Hot Lists for any personal purpose.

5.) First Amendment Rights: It is a violation of this policy to use the ALPR system or associated files or Hot Lists for the purpose or known effect of infringing upon First Amendment rights.

Anyone who engages in an impermissible use of the ALPR system or associated files or Hot Lists may be subjected to:

- Criminal prosecution

- Civil liability, and/or

- Administrative sanctions, up to and including termination, pursuant to and consistent with the relevant collective bargaining agreements and Department policies.

462.5 DATA COLLECTION AND RETENTION

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The Administration Division Commander is responsible for ensuring systems and processes are in place for the proper collection and retention of ALPR data. Data will be transferred from vehicles to the designated storage in accordance with department procedures.

All [vehicle mounted](#) ALPR data downloaded to the Santa Clara County server shall be stored for a maximum of one year (Government Code § 34090.6) and thereafter shall be immediately purged from any outside servers, including the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center and other governmental servers in accordance with the established records retention schedule, unless such data 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.

[ALPR vendor will store the fixed position ALPR data and ensure proper maintenance and security of data stored in their data towers. The vendor will purge their data at the end of 30 days of storage. However, this will not preclude Los Altos Police Department from maintaining any relevant vehicle data obtained from the system after that period pursuant to the City of Los Altos retention schedule.](#)

[Information gathered or collected and records retained by the vendor or any other Los Altos Police Department ALPR systems, will not be sold, accessed or used for any reason other than legitimate law enforcement or public safety purposes.](#)

462.6 ACCOUNTABILITY AND SAFEGUARDS

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All data will be closely safeguarded and protected by both procedural and technological means. The Los Altos Police Department will observe the following safeguards regarding access to and use of stored data (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53):

- (a) All ALPR data downloaded to the mobile workstation and in storage shall be accessible only through a login/password-protected system capable of documenting all access of information by name, date and time (Civil Code § 1798.90.52).
- (b) [All non-law enforcement requests for access to stored ALPR data will be processed in accordance with applicable law.](#)
- (c) Members approved to access ALPR data under these guidelines are permitted to access the data for legitimate law enforcement purposes only, such as when the data relate to a specific criminal investigation or department-related civil or administrative action.
- (d) [ALPR data may be released to other authorized and verified law enforcement officials and agencies for legitimate law enforcement purposes.](#)
- (e) [Every ALPR browsing inquiry must be documented by either the associated Los Altos Police Department case number or incident number, and the reason for the inquiry.](#)
- (f) ALPR system audits ~~shall~~ **shall** be conducted on an ~~an~~ **semi**-annual basis by the Administration Division Captain.

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- (g) [Annual ALPR audits will be conducted by an outside law enforcement agency as an added measure of transparency and to ensure policy compliance by members of the Los Altos Police Department.](#)

For security or data breaches, see the Records Release and Maintenance Policy.

[It is the responsibility of the Administrative Division Captain, or her/his designee, to ensure that an audit is conducted of ALPR detection browsing inquiries at least twice during each calendar year. The Department will audit a sampling of the ALPR system utilization from the prior 6 month period to verify proper use in accordance with the above- authorized uses. The audit will randomly select at minimum 10 detection browsing inquiries conducted by department employees during the preceding 6 month period and determine if each inquiry meets the requirements established in this policy.](#)

[The audit will be documented in the form of an internal department memorandum to the Chief of Police. The memorandum will include any data errors found so that such errors can be corrected. After review by the Chief of Police, the memorandum and any associated documentation will be filed and retained by the Custodian of Records.](#)

[In addition, a designated law enforcement agency will do an annual audit of ALPR data, as an added layer of accountability, to ensure members of the Los Altos Police Department are in compliance with this policy.](#)

462.7 RELEASING ALPR DATA

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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 procedures:

- (a) The agency makes a written request for the ALPR data that includes:
 1. The name of the agency.
 2. The name of the person requesting.
 3. The intended purpose of obtaining the information.
- (b) The request is reviewed by the Administration Division Commander or the authorized designee and approved before the request is fulfilled.
- (c) The approved request is retained on file.
- (d) [The Chief of Police or the authorized designee will consider the California Values Act \(Government Code 7282.5; Government Code 7284.2 et seq\), before approving the release of ALPR data. The Los Altos Police Department does not permit the sharing of ALPR data gathered by the City or its contractors/subcontractors for purpose of federal immigration enforcement, these federal immigration agencies include Immigrations and Customs \(ICE\) and Customs and Border Patrol \(CBP\).](#)

Requests for ALPR data by non-law enforcement or non-prosecutorial agencies will be processed as provided in the Records Maintenance and Release Policy (Civil Code § 1798.90.55).

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462.8 TRAINING

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The Administration Division Captain should ensure that members receive department-approved training for those authorized to use or access the ALPR system (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53).