

Purpose

The objective of the ALPR program is to increase the safety of Maryland roadways while reducing the impact of economic issues caused by auto theft and other vehicle-related crimes. The Cecil County Sheriff's Office is committed to increasing the detection of stolen vehicles; vehicles with revoked or suspended registrations, uninsured vehicles, vehicles operated by drivers with suspended or revoked licenses, other vehicle-related crimes that impact the safety of citizens and finding wanted and missing persons.

Policy

To establish guidelines for the deployment, maintenance, training and data storage associated with the usage of Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) systems.

Definitions:

Fixed ALPR System: ALPR cameras that are permanently affixed to a structure, such as a pole, a traffic barrier, or a bridge.

Mobile ALPR System: ALPR cameras that are affixed, either permanently (hardwired) or temporarily (e.g., magnet-mounted), to a law enforcement vehicle for mobile deployment.

Hot List: License plate numbers of stolen cars, vehicles owned by persons of interest, and vehicles associated with wanted persons. Hot List information can come from a variety of sources, including stolen vehicle information from the National Insurance Crime Bureau and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), as well as national AMBER Alerts and Department of Homeland Security watch lists. Departments of motor vehicles can provide lists of expired registration tags, and law enforcement agencies can interface their own, locally compiled Hot Lists to the ALPR system. These lists serve an officer safety function as well as an investigatory purpose. In addition to agency supported Hot Lists, users may also manually add license plate numbers to Hot Lists in order to be alerted if and when a vehicle license plate of interest is "read" by the ALPR system.

Alert: A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the ALPR system receives a potential "hit" on a license plate.

Hit: A read matched to a plate that has previously been registered on an agency's "Hot List" of vehicle plates related to stolen vehicles, wanted vehicles, or other factors supporting the investigation, or which has been manually registered by a user for further investigation.

Captured Plate Data: Any characters appearing on a license plate, dates and times of record collection, photographs, global positioning system coordinates, and any other data collected by or derived from an Automatic License Plate Recognition System. Captured plate data includes both active and historical data.

Historical Data: Any data collected by an ALPR system and stored for future investigative or analytical use. The database which houses historical data may contain but is not limited to dates, times, characters appearing on a license plate, location of the read and an image of the individual motor vehicle license plate. Any data collected by an ALPR system in accordance with this policy shall be collected for a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

Law Enforcement Agency: A federal, state or local law enforcement agency, police department, or sheriff's office. A law enforcement agency may also be a municipal corporation that; by statute, ordinance, or common law is authorized to enforce the general criminal and traffic laws of the State.

Legitimate Law Enforcement Purpose: Applies to the access of ALPR Data and means the investigation, detection, analysis or enforcement of a crime; violations of the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) laws; for the operation of AMBER, SILVER or BLUE alerts for missing, endangered, or wanted person searches, terrorist watch list alerts, and for public safety. NOTE: "Legitimate law enforcement purpose" does not include video tolling, a technique using video or still images of a vehicle's license plate to identify the vehicle for payment.

ALPR Program Manager/Coordinator: Employee charged with coordinating all daily operations of the sheriff's office ALPR program.

I. Overview

- A. The identification of stolen vehicles, stolen license plates and wanted and missing persons are the primary focuses of the ALPR program.
 - 1. ALPR technology uses specialized cameras and computers to capture large numbers of license plate photographs and compares them to a list of plates of interest.
- B. The plates of interest are referred to as a "hot list".
 - 1. ALPR systems can identify a target plate within seconds of contact, allowing law enforcement personnel to identify target vehicles that may otherwise be overlooked.
 - 2. ALPR systems also record every license plate they scan and record the location, date and time of each license plate read.
 - 3. The technology is available in mobile systems mounted on agency vehicles, which are designed to allow officers to patrol at normal speeds, while the system reads license plates they come in contact with and alerts them if there is a match to a "hot list".

- C. The Sheriff's Office (CCSO) will house the ALPR System Operations Center through the LEARN Server, which is the central clearinghouse for all license plates scanned by ALPR systems.
- D. The Operations Center is a data collection and reporting tool maintained by CCSO personnel designated by the Sheriff.
 - 1. The Operations Center provides a database, inquiry tool, history tracking, and reporting for the entire ALPR program, which manages and provides a storage and search structure for the license plate information being collected in the field.
 - 2. The Operations Center acts as a secure intranet site, allowing only personnel with password-protected access to some or all of the license plate data collected. The Operations Center receives all scanned reads collected by fixed and mobile ALPR systems deployed throughout Cecil County and organizes the data in a central database, which supports the reporting and query functions.
- E. ALPR equipment provides access to stolen and wanted files and is also used in furtherance of criminal investigations.
- F. Use of the ALPR system and access to its data requires a legitimate law enforcement purpose.
 - 1. No member may use or authorize the use of the equipment or database records for any other reason.
 - 2. Any unauthorized use of, dissemination of or other violations of information obtained from the ALPR system can and will result in further administrative and/or disciplinary action.
 - 3. ALPR systems are to be used for law enforcement purposes only.

II. Installation/Maintenance

- A. Mobile ALPR systems may be installed on agency selected vehicles per the Sheriff or his designee.
- B. If damage is discovered to the ALPR equipment, the appropriate supervisor shall be notified and established policy and procedure for damaged equipment shall be followed.
- C. It is the responsibility of the assigned deputy for maintenance and cleaning of the ALPR equipment according to manufacturer's recommendations.

III. Procedure

- A. When an alarm is received alerting personnel of a positive "hit", a digital image of the license plate will be displayed on the MDT screen for review.

- B. A positive “hit” alone DOES NOT establish probable cause. The information received from license plates that are recognized as positive “hits” is dated and maybe up to twenty-four (24) hours old.
- C. The “hit” MUST be confirmed prior to taking any enforcement action. Personnel must verify all positive “hits” through METERS and NCIC and follow appropriate policies and procedures.
- D. Personnel who receive an alarm of a positive “hit” on a scanned license plate shall confirm the digital image of the license plate to the NCIC information to verify the “hit”. Verified positive “hits” shall be accepted by activating the “correct” alarm key on the video monitoring screen.
- E. When an alarm does not result in a verified positive “hit”, personnel shall activate the “incorrect” alarm key.
- F. The ALPR system is ONLY to be used as an investigative tool and confirmation is essential prior to a stop.

IV. Emergency Operations

- A. During the course of normal law enforcement duties, incidents may occur that require immediate assistance. The ALPR system can be a valuable tool in these situations, such as alerts, bank robberies, or other violent crimes and can help bring the incident to a safe and successful conclusion.
- B. All license plate information related to AMBER, Silver, and Blue alerts will be immediately entered into the Operations Center’s ALPR server by Maryland State Police (MSP) personnel. The “hot list” will be updated with the alert information and transferred in a timely manner to all ALPR systems.
- C. In the event of a critical situation with vehicle registration information, the deployment of an ALPR system can maximize the coverage area to search for any vehicle involved.
- D. ALPR equipped vehicles should be directed to patrol areas which are likely to increase the chance of encountering the vehicle.
- E. The duty officer will contact the MSP ALPR Program Administrator or designee and request that the Operations Center’s ALPR server be searched to determine if any mobile or fixed ALPR systems had previously encountered the target plate.

V. Training

- A. All operators shall receive training prior to operating the ALPR system. Only personnel that have successfully completed approved training are allowed to operate the ALPR equipment or system.
- B. Operators will use the ALPR equipment and system in accordance with their training and this policy.

VI. ALPR Program Manager/Coordinator

- A. The Traffic Unit Supervisor shall serve as the ALPR Program Manager/Coordinator responsible for:
1. Coordinate training of personnel and maintain a list of qualified operators.
 2. Maintain statistical data on ALPR usage.
 3. Develop procedures for updating the "Hot List."
 4. Ensure ALPR software updates are completed.
 5. Ensure all maintenance and repair of ALPR equipment is completed.
 6. Conduct an annual audit by a random selection of relevant requests at a sample rate of 1% of records or a minimum of 50 up to 10,000 within the ALPR server to ensure:
 - i. Sheriff's Office compliance with this policy and state and federal laws.
 - ii. Personnel with access to and use of ALPR data have been properly screened and trained.
 - iii. The Sheriff's Office has adequate procedures related to the use of the ALPR system, and that queries and information obtained through the system are conducted, shared, and/or disseminated for legitimate law enforcement purposes.
- B. Internal Audits
1. Certify annual ALPR data audits as performed by the ALPR Coordinator.
 2. Maintain all completed and certified ALPR Record Audit Forms for no less than 3 years.

VII. Auditing of ALPR

- A. The Sheriff's Office will follow auditing procedures which ensures compliance with Maryland Annotated Code, General Provisions Article, GP § 4-326 Captured Plate Data and Public Safety Article, PS § 3-509 Use of Captured Plate Data. Reporting requirements and audit results are due to the State Judicial Proceedings Committee, the House Judiciary Committee, and the Legislative Policy Committee, based on data from the previous year on to before March 1st of each year.
- B. The Sheriff's Office will conduct an annual audit and submit to MCAC for review and reporting to the State Judicial Proceedings Committee, the House Judiciary Committee, and the Legislative Policy Committee.
- C. The ALPR Supervisor shall be responsible for establishing an audit trail. The contents of the audit trail will contain the following information:
1. The personnel in the law enforcement agency that are authorized to query captured plate data gathered by an ALPR system.

2. The procedures and safeguards to ensure that the personnel within the law enforcement agency with access to the ALPR database are adequately screened and trained (Maintain records of all training curricula for relevancy and proficiency affirmation)
 3. Individual requests made by Law Enforcement Officer or Agency for data collected by an ALPR system or stored in an ALPR database operated by the law enforcement agency to include all pertinent information regarding the request. (i.e. date, time, the purpose of the request, case number, the identity of agency, requesters name and contact information, and the information queried within the ALPR system.)
- D. An audit will be conducted annually. The Program Manager/Coordinator ensures that only authorized users are accessing and sharing captured plate data for legitimate law enforcement purposes.
- E. The Certifying Official will be the Patrol Lieutenant or the Sheriff's designee in his absence. The Certifying Official is responsible for approving the results of the annual audit. This includes ensuring audit procedures were followed, appropriate reviews were conducted, and audit documents conform with generally accepted audit practices. The Certifying Official shall not be directly associated with the operations of the ALPR program and is not required to be assigned to the law enforcement agency.
- F. The Auditors report with appropriate additional documentation (worksheet, case file, etc.) shall be provided to the certifying official for validation. Prior to March 1st of each year, the audit will be forwarded to MCAC License Plater Reader Program. MCAC on behalf of CCSO will then report to the State Judicial Proceedings Committee, the House Judiciary Committee, and the Legislative Policy Committee, in accordance with Section 2-1246 of the State Government Article, on the lists of audits that were completed and their results.

VIII. Storage/Retention of Records

- A. All ALPR system data will be maintained on the Operations Center server at CCSO, LEARN Server.