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|  | Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures | | |
| | Subject: <i>Automated License Plate Reader (LPR)</i> | Issued: 03/15/2022 | TBP: |

Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to define and outline the appropriate applications and restrictions regarding the use of the automated license plate reader (LPR) equipment operated by Departmental personnel.

Policy

It is the policy of the Abilene Police Department to only use license plate reader equipment as directed by Departmental policy, state and federal law. Personnel trained in its use and in applications acceptable by the Department will only utilize LPR equipment. The data collected by the LPR will be restricted to official law enforcement use only. The Abilene Police Department requires that all employees abide by the guidelines set forth in this policy.

Definitions

Alert Data – Information captured by an LPR relating to a license plate that matches the license plate on a particular “Hot List”.

Automated License Plate Reader (LPR) – Equipment consisting of fixed cameras and computer hardware/software used to automatically recognize and interpret the characters on vehicle license plates. This data is then recorded and matched against a “Hot List” of license plates.

Authorized User – A sworn or non-sworn member of the Department who has been authorized by the Chief of Police to operate an LPR or to access and use LPR stored data, and who has successfully completed training provided by the agency.

Hot List – A database populated with license plates of specific concern to law enforcement. This database includes, but is not limited to, information from TCIC, NCIC, Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Abilene Police Department.


Hit – A positive indication of a match between a license plate observed and read by the LPR and a license plate on a “Hot List”. **Verification of a stolen vehicle must be confirmed prior to taking law enforcement action.**

General Procedures

Operators assigned to a unit that is equipped with LPR equipment will ensure the equipment is turned on during the entire shift.

Employees must receive training before they can be assigned to an LPR equipped patrol unit. Training will be provided by the Department’s coordinator or their designee.

All users will be required to have individual credentials for access and use of the system and/or data to ensure proper operation and facilitate oversight of the LPR system.

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Deployment Procedures

An LPR mounted on a portable trailer will not be placed in the traffic lanes of city streets. The trailer should be placed near the roadway to be able to capture the data for vehicles traveling on that roadway.

Placing the LPR trailer in a TXDOT right of way requires prior approval from the Texas DPs and TXDOT.

Coordinator Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the LPR coordinator to:

- A. Administer and manage the LPR program.
- B. Complete any administrative functions related to the LPR system.
- C. Enter approved users and roles of the users into the LPR system.
- D. Coordinate LPR training for employees.
- E. Troubleshoot, document and coordinate maintenance and repairs on LPR equipment.
- F. Determining retention period of data, which requires:
 1. Balancing existing technology.
 2. Current state law.
 3. Data storage capabilities.
 4. Cost and investigative needs while determining or adjusting data retention periods.


LPR Usage

The LPR system does not have access to real time data; therefore, an alert alone shall not be a basis for law enforcement action.

Prior to initiating a stop on a vehicle or other intervention based on alert data, officers shall:

- A. Visually confirm license plate number – Officers shall visually verify that the license plate on the vehicle matches identically to the suspected license plate from the “Hot List”.
- B. Confirmation (Confirmed read) – Officers must receive confirmation by running the visually verified license plate (on the vehicle) through their MDC or Dispatch. Once the license plate number and wanted status is confirmed, a traffic stop may be initiated.
- C. Independent Probable Cause – Nothing in this policy prevents an officer from taking law enforcement action on a vehicle if probable cause exists independent of the LPR alert data.

All investigative queries into collected LPR data is recorded under the officer’s user profile and is available for auditing and review by the Department. Any perceived policy violation or other misuse of the system may result in appropriate disciplinary action.

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The database may be accessed for law enforcement purposes only. Users will be trained in the use of the system that can search the database for specific license plates, partial license plates, geographic areas, and periods.

In those instances where LPR data is identified as relevant to a specific case or investigation, the data should be retained in an investigative file or electronically attached to the case in the records management system.

LPR System Maintenance

Employees must inspect the LPR equipment and notify their supervisor immediately of any damage or malfunction of the LPR equipment.

LPR cameras are attached to the vehicle in a manner designed to ensure the maximum accurate reads possible. Only properly trained personnel are authorized to move and/or adjust the cameras.

Designated personnel will maintain LPR cameras, equipment, and hotlist.

LPR data will download information back to DPS every 24 hours and data collected shall be stored by the software provider for a minimum period of 5 years.