

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)

431.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the use and operation of Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs). ALPRs are used by the Urbana Police Department for official use only in the furtherance of investigations.

431.2 DEFINITIONS

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

Authorized Reader - A sworn Urbana officer or Police Services Representative that receives and reads hits or alerts.

Authorized User - A detective, supervisor, or ALPR System Administrator who enters, modifies, queries, or maintains records within the ALPR system. All Authorized Users shall be employees of the Urbana Police Department.

Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) - Equipment consisting of cameras, computers, and computer software used to automatically recognize and interpret the characters on motor vehicle license plates. Digital images captured by the cameras are converted into data that is processed through the ALPR system (also known as Automated License Plate Recognition).

Hit - A read matched to a license plate that 1) is on the local hot list on the ALPR system that has been added by an Authorized User, or 2) has been previously entered into National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and/or the Law Enforcement Agency Data System (LEADS).

Hot List - The license plate number and vehicle description of, or associated with a stolen vehicle, a wanted subject, missing person, AMBER Alert, Silver Alert and vehicles used or related to a crime, excluding City ordinance violations, business offenses, petty offenses, some traffic and misdemeanor offenses for which the state legislature prohibits custodial arrests.

Query - A request to access data directly from the ALPR system, including digital images and metadata.

Read - The capture of a digital image, license plate, or vehicle with associated metadata (e.g., date, time, GPS coordinates with vehicle image capture).

431.3 ACCOUNTABILITY AND SAFEGUARDS

Access to data will be closely safeguarded and protected by both procedural and technological means. The Urbana Police Department will observe the following safeguards regarding access to and use of stored data:

- (a) Only Authorized Users shall query the ALPR system.
- (b) All sworn officers and PSRs may receive hit/alert on their mobile data computers or other similarly equipped device.

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- (c) Authorized users are permitted to access the ALPR system for legitimate law enforcement purposes only.
- (d) Intentional misuse or abuse of the ALPR system, software, associated databases, or data shall be subject to sanctions and/disciplinary action potentially up to and including termination of employment. Misuse or abuse includes:
 - 1. To harass or intimidate any person or group
 - 2. To surveil a person or group solely for political or ideological alignment
 - 3. Use for personal reasons
 - 4. Any use that is not consistent with legitimate law enforcement business and this policy
- (e) Information obtained from the ALPR system, software, associated databases, and data may not be disseminated to the public except as authorized or required by law.
- (f) All ALPR data downloaded to the mobile workstation and server shall be accessible only through a login/password-protected system capable of documenting all access of information by name, date, and time.
- (g) ALPR system audits shall be conducted on a regular basis by the ALPR system administrator. At a minimum:
 - 1. Will be performed at least twice annually.
 - 2. Will be performed by two people, at least one of whom shall not be a police department employee.
 - 3. Audits shall include a review of access records for indications of misuse.
 - 4. Audits shall include system checks to ensure proper alignment and functionality.

431.4 ADMINISTRATION OF ALPR DATA

All installation and maintenance of ALPR equipment, as well as ALPR data retention and access, shall be managed by ALPR System Administrator as designated by the Chief of Police.

431.5 ALPR OPERATION

The use of an ALPR is restricted to the purposes outlined below.

- (a) Authorized Readers shall use the alert functionality of the ALPR system on their mobile data computers during the course of their normal duty.
- (b) Any user of the ALPR system is expected to report any known issues to the ALPR System Administrator in a timely fashion.
- (c) ALPR hits alone do not constitute reasonable suspicion or probable cause for a stop. Prior to taking enforcement action or initiating a traffic stop on an ALPR hit/alert, in all circumstances an officer shall:
 - 1. Visually confirm that a motor vehicle's license plate number and vehicle description matches the license plate number and vehicle description

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recognized by the ALPR system, including both the alphanumeric characters of the license plate as well as the state of issuance; and

2. Verify the hit/alert of the license plate through a query of the Illinois Law Enforcement Agencies Data System (LEADS) and/or the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) before taking enforcement action that is based solely upon an ALPR alert if the hit/alert is originated in either LEADS or NCIC.
- (d) ALPR hits alone do not constitute probable cause for a search of either the vehicle or property associated with the registered owner. As in all cases, probable cause to conduct a search must be specific and individualized based on articulable facts.
 - (e) When a hit/alert is triggered, the officer following up on the hit shall either accept or reject the hit/alert and document it using the ALPR system software.
 - (f) Enforcement action taken in response to a hit/alert shall be documented on a field interview card, written warning, citation, and/or police report.
 - (g) Only supervisors, detectives, and the ALPR System Administrator are authorized to enter information into the ALPR local hot list. All entries into the local hot list shall document justification into the notes field.
 - (h) The department's local hot list shall only include incidents for which a custodial arrest could be made and will generally be for serious and violent crime investigations. (See also "Hot List" in definitions)
 - (i) Officers shall only act on hot list alerts from other agencies if those alerts comport with the hot list requirements of the Urbana Police Department.
 - (j) At the beginning of each Patrol shift, a shift supervisor shall ensure that the ALPR system has been updated with the most current hot list available.
 - (k) If a vehicle on the hot list is located by an officer and no longer needs to be included on the hot list, it is the responsibility of the locating officer and their supervisor to remove the located vehicle from the hot list.
 - (l) Information related to the crime, investigation, or officer safety information may be entered into a hot list text field. Other pieces of information should not be entered.
 - (m) Investigative alerts may be entered into the local hot list by the Criminal Investigations Division with the approval of the division supervisor. Each investigative alert shall contain specific instructions on the expected action (e.g., report presence of vehicle to Criminal Investigations Division, but do not initiate contact; conduct stop to identify occupants of vehicle; place an investigative detention on the occupants of the vehicle and notify Criminal Investigations Division supervisor).

431.6 ALPR DEPLOYMENT

Generally, the department will deploy ALPR technology around, but not within, neighborhoods most frequently affected by concentrations of crime, especially violent crime. This technology shall not be used to intentionally saturate a particular neighborhood. Deployment determinations will be made primarily using reported crime data and not anecdotal information. However, there

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are a multitude of factors, such as traffic volumes, flow, road design, installation limitations, paths of likely flight, etc., to be considered in determining specific deployment locations.

431.7 ALPR DATA COLLECTION, STORAGE, AND RETENTION

All data and images gathered by an ALPR are for the official use of the Urbana Police Department. Because such data may contain confidential LEADS and NCIC information, it is not open to public review. ALPR information gathered and retained by this department may be used and shared with prosecutors or others only as permitted by law.

The ALPR database is not in the possession of the City of Urbana. The Chief of Police shall direct that all ALPR data collected shall be purged from the ALPR database after 30 days unless it has become, or it is reasonable to believe it will become, evidence in a specific criminal or Department-related civil or administrative action or is subject to a lawful action to produce records. In such circumstances, the applicable data shall be downloaded from the CJIS compliant ALPR server onto the appropriate local media or server and booked into evidence.

All saved data shall be closely safeguarded and protected. All ALPR data shall only be accessible through a login/password-protected system capable of documenting who accessed the information by name, date, time, and justification for the query.

Authorized users are permitted to access the data when there is an articulable suspicion that the data relates to an investigation in a specific criminal or Department related civil or administrative action.

431.8 TRAINING

Only persons trained in the use of the ALPR system, including its privacy and civil liberties protections, shall be allowed to be an Authorized Reader and/or Authorized User. Training shall consist of:

- Legal authorities, developments, and issues involving the use of ALPR data and technology
- Current department policy regarding appropriate use of ALPR systems
- Evolution of ALPR and related technologies, including new capabilities and associated risks
- Technical, physical, administrative, and procedural measures to protect the security of ALPR data against unauthorized access or use
- Practical exercises in the use of the current ALPR system

Training shall be updated as technological, legal, and other changes that affect the use of the ALPR system occur. Generally, this training should occur on an annual basis.