

# SOLANO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

**General Order #**                **6.023**

**Subject:**                        **Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPR)**

**Date Issued:**                **April 22, 2016**

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## I.        PURPOSE

This policy provides guidance in the uniform use of Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) equipment by members of the Solano County Sheriff's Office.

## II.       OVERVIEW

Automatic License Plate Reader technology utilizes specialized digital cameras and computers to quickly capture large numbers of photographs of license plates, convert them to text and compare them quickly to a large list of license plates of interest. ALPR systems can identify a target plate within seconds of coming in contact with it, allowing law enforcement to identify target vehicles that might otherwise be overlooked.

## III.      DEFINITIONS

- A.       Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR): A device that uses cameras and computer technology to compare digital images of license plates to lists of known plates of interest.
  
- B.       Hot list: A list containing license plates of interest compiled from a variety of sources. These sources include, but may not be limited to:
  - 1.       The National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) stolen vehicle information;
  - 2.       The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) stolen vehicle information;
  - 3.       National AMBER Alerts;
  - 4.       Department of Homeland Security watch lists;
  - 5.       Departments of Motor Vehicles lists of expired registrations;
  - 6.       Law enforcement agencies locally compiled hot lists, which can be added to the ALPR system.

- C. Target plate: The registration plate of a motor vehicle identified and photographed by the Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPR).
- D. Detection: Data obtained by an ALPR of license plates within public view that were read by the device, including potential images of the plate and vehicle on which it was displayed, and information regarding the location of the police vehicle at the time of the ALPR read.
- E. Hit: Alert from the ALPR system that a scanned license plate number may be in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) or other law enforcement database for a specific reason including, but not limited to, being related to a stolen car, wanted person, missing person, domestic violence protective order or terrorist-related activity.

#### IV. POLICY

- A. ALPRs shall be used only by sworn or civilian members of the Solano County Sheriff's Office who have been trained and certified in the use of the equipment.
- B. ALPR devices are deployed in Sheriff's Office vehicles to aid in gathering evidence of criminal activity.
  - 1. 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.
  - 2. 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 where homicides, shootings and other major incidents have occurred. Partial license plates reported during major crimes should be entered into the ALPR system in an attempt to identify suspect vehicles.
  - 3. No ALPR operator may access California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) data unless otherwise authorized to do so.
- C. All data and images contained in the ALPR system are protected records of the Sheriff's Office and are not to be disseminated in any manner not authorized by policy without the express permission of executive management.

- D. An ALPR device shall only be used for official and legitimate law enforcement business. Department personnel shall not use, or allow others to use, the equipment or database records for any personal or otherwise unauthorized purpose.
  
- E. Employee Responsibilities Related to the Use of ALPR Devices
  - 1. Deputies assigned to vehicles equipped with ALPR equipment shall ensure that all required pre-operational checks are performed in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Improperly functioning devices shall be immediately reported to the supervisor and a maintenance request completed.
  - 2. The ALPR should be active at all times while such equipped vehicles are on duty except for maintenance issues and any conflict, that do not allow other programs to work on the MDT.
  - 3. Deputies utilizing the ALPR equipment should ensure that the most current hot list has been downloaded twice each shift.
  - 4. Deputies utilizing ALPR equipment shall visually verify the license plate on the vehicle with a plate captured by the system and confirm any hits through dispatch before any law enforcement action is taken on any stolen vehicles or warrant. Hits from the ALPR system does not establish probable cause for stopping, searching or detaining a vehicle and its occupant(s).
  - 5. The use of the ALPR has no direct effect on current pursuit policy.
  
- F. Supervisor Responsibilities
  - 1. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring ALPR policy compliance by the employees on duty.
  - 2. Supervisors informed of a malfunctioning device shall ensure the need for repairs is documented in accordance with departmental procedure, and if necessary reassign the deputy to a vehicle with functioning equipment and/or remove a vehicle from service for repairs.
  - 3. Supervisors shall have review access to all data produced by use of the ALPR system for all purposes including case review,

complaint or criminal investigative purposes and determining training needs.

- G. The Solano County Sheriff's Office will not maintain an ALPR server. All information collected will be up loaded into the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center (NICRIC) ALPR server at the end of shift. The information, once uploaded becomes the records of the NICRIC and will be available to other law enforcement agencies.
1. Non-law enforcement requests for access to ALPR data shall be referred to the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center for processing in accordance with applicable law.
  2. All ALPR data is available to be downloaded to a mobile or office workstation of the Sheriff's Office and shall be accessible only through a login/password- protected system capable of documenting all access of information by name, date and time.
  3. Persons approved by executive management to access ALPR data 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.
  4. All law enforcement related ALPR data queries to the system should be accompanied by the law enforcement case number corresponding with the investigation, when available.
  5. ALPR data retrieved from the system may be released to other authorized and verified law enforcement officials and agencies at any time for legitimate law enforcement purposes as a part of coordinated investigative efforts.
- H. ALPR system audits should be conducted on a regular basis by the NICRIC.

By order of



THOMAS A. FERRARA  
Sheriff-Coroner  
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