
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE



Field Operations Support Services, (323) 526-5760

FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE: 09-04

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ISSUED FOR: OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY
FIELD OPERATIONS REGIONS
DETECTIVE DIVISION
TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION

AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION (ALPR) SYSTEM

Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish procedural guidelines and responsibilities of personnel and units utilizing the Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) system. As with any technical system, adherence to standards and procedures is a key element to the success of the system.

Background

ALPR is a computer-based system that utilizes special cameras to capture a color image, as well as an infrared image, of the license plate of a passing vehicle. The infrared image is converted into a text file utilizing Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology. The text file is automatically compared against an "informational data file" containing information on stolen or wanted vehicles as well as vehicles associated with AMBER alerts, warrant subjects or other criteria. If a match is found, the user is notified of the vehicle "hit" by an audible alert and an associated notation on the user's computer screen.

ALPR cameras can be mobile (mounted on vehicles) or on fixed positions such as freeway overpasses or traffic signals. ALPR systems mounted on vehicles have all the necessary equipment to scan plates, notify the user of a vehicle hit, and store the plate scan data for uploading into the ALPR server at a later time. ALPR fixed positions transmit plate scan data to the ALPR server as they are scanned and notify a central dispatch, such as a station desk, of any vehicle hit.

ALPR cameras can photograph thousands of plates in a shift. All plate scan data collected from the ALPR cameras is transmitted to an ALPR server. The ALPR server resides within the Sheriff's Data Network (SDN). In addition to software applications that are used to run the ALPR server, the ALPR server also houses the "informational data file" containing wanted, stolen, or vehicles of interest, as well as all the plate scans

captured by the ALPR cameras.

The informational data file is comprised of information from the Stolen Vehicle System (SVS), Felony Warrants System (FWS), Countywide Warrant System (CWS), and user defined "hot lists." The Informational data file is updated throughout the day with different data sources being "refreshed" at different intervals. SVS/FWS data is refreshed from the state database three times per day, CWS data is refreshed from the warrant repository twice a day, and hot list data is refreshed upon input into the ALPR server. It is important that ALPR users take into account the amount of lag time between receiving an ALPR hit notification and the last updating of the informational data file within the mobile ALPR unit database.

When possible, confirm that the mobile ALPR unit hit information is still valid, either through the Sheriff's Communication Center (SCC) or via your Mobile Digital Terminal (MDT) prior to taking police action. Confirmation can be deferred in rare circumstances (i.e. special investigative units) when compelling circumstances may exist that, if SCC is contacted, could jeopardize the investigation and/or officer safety.

Fixed ALPR cameras have a continuous connection to the ALPR server. They are capable of uploading plate scan data to the ALPR server as the scans occur. ALPR scans can be compared against the informational data file immediately when the data sources are updated.

Mobile ALPR units do not have a continuous connection to the ALPR server. In order to facilitate the exchange of data, most stations and other designated facilities have installed wireless access points which will allow connectivity to the ALPR server via wireless transmission. Once in range of a wireless access point, mobile ALPR users can activate an onboard "sync button" which will upload plate scan information from the vehicle to the ALPR server and/or download the latest informational data file from the ALPR server to the vehicle. It is imperative that mobile ALPR users sync their mobile units at least once at the beginning of their shift to ensure they have the latest informational data available.

Policy and Procedures

Units utilizing ALPR technology shall publish unit level policy to govern procedures on ALPR usage as well as the syncing of data between the mobile ALPR units and the ALPR server.

Mobile ALPR unit users receiving an alert that a vehicle is stolen, wanted or has a warrant associated with it shall immediately confirm the status of the vehicle by running the license plate either manually via the MDT/CAD or over the radio via SCC, unless compelling circumstances are present or officer safety issues make it unsafe to do so. In such cases, deputies shall confirm the status of the wanted vehicle as soon as possible. When requesting SCC to confirm the status of an ALPR alert, the deputy shall

advise SCC the request is for an ALPR alert on a vehicle.

In the case of a stolen vehicle alert, personnel may regard the vehicle as a known stolen vehicle, while awaiting a secondary confirmation. If the decision is made to initiate a "Code-9" due to an ALPR alert on a stolen vehicle, deputies shall advise SCC they are following a vehicle due to an ALPR stolen vehicle alert (i.e. "142F1 is code 9 on 10-29V ALPR hit") prior to receiving a secondary confirmation by MDT/SCC.

Deputies shall adhere to the Department's pursuit policy as described in the Manual of Policy and Procedures § 5-09/210.00. SCC shall immediately provide secondary confirmation or advise the unit that the vehicle is not reported as stolen.

When Desk Personnel receive an alert from a fixed ALPR system, which is the result of an image taken from a fixed camera, they shall confirm the current status of the vehicle via their CAD terminal or via SCC. While waiting for confirmation, desk personnel will advise field patrol units of the ALPR alert, the location, the vehicle description, request aero bureau, and coordinate responding field units.

Any incident associated with the ALPR system shall be documented using a secondary ALPR statistical code. The statistical code shall go on the classification line of the Incident Report (SH-R-49) and in the MDT clearance. Additionally, any vehicle recovered using the ALPR system shall have "ALPR RECOVERY" written across the top of the CHP-180 and the secondary ALPR statistical clearance code will be entered into the MDT clearance log. ALPR statistical codes cannot be used for the issuance of an URN number, but shall be used as a secondary statistical clearance code.

Please ensure the following stat codes are used:

835 - ASAP - ALPR/MOBILE
836 - ASAP - ALPR/FIXED CAMERA

Examples:

Personnel making an arrest due to an ALPR alert shall enter "835" or "836" as a secondary statistical clearance code in their MDT Log Clearance and on the Classification line of the SH-R-49 report form.

Personnel recovering a stolen vehicle with no suspect in custody shall write "ALPR-CAR RECOVERY" on the top of the CHP-180 as well as use the stat "835" as a secondary MDT Log Clearance.

Plate scan information is retained for a period of two years and may be queried for use in law enforcement investigations. Access to plate scan information is restricted to approved personnel with assigned passwords. Access to this data is for law

enforcement purposes only. Any other use of this data is strictly forbidden. Employees found using this data for anything other than law enforcement purposes will be subject to discipline under Manual of Policy and Procedures sections 3-07/210.00 Permissible Use and 3-07/220.00 Prohibitions.

Hot lists are comprised of user defined data that is manually input into the informational data file so that ALPR users will be alerted whenever a "vehicle of interest" is located. Current use of hot lists include AMBER alerts and vehicles associated with 290 sex registrants. Hot lists can be loaded into a specific station area vehicle or to ALPR all vehicles countywide.

Hot lists can be input into the ALPR server informational data file only by ALPR administrators. Unit commanders, or their designees, must approve hot list information that is intended for use solely in their area cars. With the exception of AMBER alert information entered by SCC personnel, hot list information intended for Department-wide use must have the approval of the Director of the Law Enforcement Information Sharing Program. Mobile ALPR users can input individual license plates into their patrol vehicle's ALPR system for use during their shift, however, the information will be deleted from that mobile ALPR unit once the vehicle syncs with the ALPR server. An ALPR vehicle alert identified via hot list information does not automatically provide ALPR users with sufficient justification to pullover or detain vehicle occupants. Often times, these hotlists will identify a "vehicle of interest" which is not necessarily wanted for a crime (ex: sex registrants vehicle). Personnel must use discretion and in some cases have independent information justifying a traffic stop.

Questions regarding the use of ALPR equipment or accessing plate scan information may be directed to the Advanced Surveillance and Protection Unit at ASAP-Team@LASD.ORG or (562) 345-4476.

Questions regarding the content of this Field Operations Directive may be directed to Field Operations Support Services at FOSS@LASD.ORG or (323)526-5760.

Affected Directives/Publication

Manual of Policy and Procedures §5-09/210.00 Pursuits

Cites/References

<http://www.pipstechnology.com/>

DRB:WJM:TPA:CWR:NBT:WJM:JLS:EPF:ef