

TITLE: Automatic License Plate Readers

SOP NUMBER: 11-039

EFFECTIVE DATE: 01-01-11

REPLACES/RESCINDS:

fcpd sop
fcpd sop

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this SOP is to establish specific procedures pertaining to the operating guidelines, maintenance, data retention, storage, access, release of information, and the responsibilities relevant to the use and operation of Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPR) and associated data. The ALPR Program will be housed and coordinated by the Commander of Patrol Bureau Division I, with technical assistance from the Information Technology Bureau and Resource Management Bureau.

II. POLICY

The use of ALPR technology is intended as a tool for law enforcement to identify stolen license plates and vehicles or any vehicle identified as having a specific interest to law enforcement. It shall be the policy of the Fairfax County Police Department to use ALPR technology for law enforcement functions that will detect criminal activity and promote the health, safety and welfare of Fairfax County residents and visitors. This technology shall be used in a manner consistent with legal and constitutional limitations, privacy concerns and the highest ethical standards.

III. DEFINITIONS

ALARM (aka hit): A positive indication or “hit” by audio and/or visual signal, of a potential match between data on the “hot list” and a license plate scanned by the ALPR System. An alarm is NOT conclusive confirmation that a license plate or vehicle is wanted, but an indicator that additional investigation is warranted.

CD-R/Compact Disc Recordable: A format that allows data to be recorded to a blank CD-R disc one time.

ELSAG Operations Center Software: Manages all data collected by ALPR units for ease of analysis. The software seamlessly monitors all ALPR units to ensure each unit is up to date with the most accurate information. The software also downloads data from the ALPR unit to the server automatically.

DOWNLOAD: Transfer of data from the Virginia State Police database consisting of license plate associated data.

HOT LIST: A “hot list” is a list of targeted license plate numbers and partial plate numbers that are uploaded to ALPR units on a daily basis.

UPLOAD: Transfer of data from ALPR units to storage on the ALPR server.

IV. OVERVIEW

Each day the Virginia State Police generates a “hot list” containing all active stolen license plates and vehicles entered into NCIC/VCIN. This information is available to authorized law enforcement personnel via a secure Web site. The “hot list” is imported either automatically through a server or manually by the end user into the License Plate Reader System. Wanted vehicles may also be entered into the ALPR manually by the end user as circumstances dictate.

The ALPR scans license plates and compares them to data provided by the Virginia State Police. The ALPR software runs in the background of the MCT, and automatically alerts the police operator to a potential stolen vehicle or license plate. The ALPR maintains the date, time and location of each license plate it scans.

V. PROCEDURES

The following procedural guidelines have been established to ensure the proper use of the Automatic License Plate Reader System.

- A. Operation of the ALPR System shall only be performed by those authorized employees who have successfully completed the Fairfax County Police Department’s approved training for ALPR devices. All operators shall receive training prior to using the ALPR System.

Training will be conducted in a “train the trainer” format. The Patrol Bureau will arrange for at least one annual “train the trainer” class. Commanders will be responsible for ensuring employees under their respective command receive proper training. Training documentation will be forwarded to the Fairfax County Criminal Justice Academy.

- B. A dedicated server for the ALPR System and software will automatically update the ALPR “hot list” on the MCTs as they become available from the Virginia State Police server.

VI. INTERNAL DATA ACCESS, STORAGE, AND RETENTION

- A. The Patrol Bureau will have overall responsibility of the collection, storage, dissemination, and retention of non-evidentiary data associated with the program. Technical assistance will be provided by the Information Technology Bureau (ITB) or the vendor (ELSAG North America 1-866-967-4900).
- B. Access to stored ALPR records shall be for a specific investigative or patrol purpose(s). ALPR data is considered an official record and shall be handled as such in accordance with Regulation 204.4. Improper or misuse of any ALPR data is grounds for disciplinary action. All data collected by the ALPR System is the sole property of the Fairfax County Police Department and shall not be released without authorization from the Chief of Police or his designee.
- C. Crime analysts and sworn employees trained in the use of the ELSAG Operations Center software shall have full access to ALPR data to conduct analysis of data and processing requests for data from any Police Department employee having a legitimate law enforcement request. Any disputes which result from a request will be resolved by a supervisor. The Department has limited licenses for the ELSAG Operations Center software, so only select terminals throughout the agency will have access to the program.
- D. In those circumstances when data is identified as having evidentiary value, a supervisor shall review the facts and determine if the data should be saved. If the reviewing supervisor determines it is reasonable to believe the data has evidentiary value, he will authorize the downloading of the applicable data from the ALPR server onto a CD-R for filing.
- E. The Master Copy CD-R disc containing the original ALPR data and images will be placed in a paper CD sleeve with the following information:
 - Case number
 - Date
 - Location of event
 - Event type
 - Investigating officer's name
 - Brief description of data extracted
- F. The sleeved CD-R will be placed in the departmental standard 9"x12" stamped envelope with all required information indicated above. The sealed envelope containing the sleeved CD-R will be submitted directly to the Record Room for filing. Nothing in this policy shall preclude the investigating officer or detective from making one additional copy for his case file.

- G. It shall be the responsibility of the operator to ensure the most current “hot list” available has been transferred into the ALPR prior to its use. A “hot list” more than 24 hours old may be utilized.
- H. A “hot list” more than 72 hours old shall not be utilized.
- I. **An “ALARM” is NOT in and of itself sufficient reasonable suspicion to make a stop or effect an arrest without further verification. After receiving an audible or visual alarm of a potential stolen vehicle or license plate the information shall be verified prior to taking any law enforcement action. The operator must use due diligence in verifying any alarms received when utilizing a hot list more than 24 hours old.** Alarm verifications will be accomplished in a two step process.
 - 1. The ALPR operator shall visually verify the subject tag with the data displayed on the ALPR screen (e.g., same state, characters).
 - 2. Once a visual comparison is confirmed, the operator shall verify the hit is still active by running the information via MCT or voice a request for a NCIC/VCIN through DPSC.

Nothing shall preclude officers acting on other indicators to develop reasonable suspicion based on training and experience.

- J. Stolen vehicle or license plate responses from NCIC/VCIN shall be confirmed by Teletype in accordance with established procedures as soon as practical.
- K. At the discretion of the ALPR operator, additional information may be entered into the ALPR System at any time. The reason for the entry shall be included in the “note” portion of the entry mask (e.g., stolen vehicle, missing person, abduction, Amber Alert, robbery suspect). The name of the investigating officer or detective with a 24/7 contact number shall also be included. Officers entering information are responsible for ensuring that all custom manual inputs have a specific criminal investigative or patrol use. The data will be overwritten automatically by the next scheduled update of the “hot list” from the Virginia State Police.
- L. After completing a manual entry the operator should query the ALPR data to determine if the license plate was scanned previously.
- M. All contacts resulting from ALPR use shall be documented as appropriate in the I/Leads Records Management System. In rare cases where documentation is not otherwise required, officers shall enter comments into the event using the COMMENT button from the event screen in I/Mobile.

- N. Any data extracted from the ALPR server to be retained as evidence shall be documented in the Incident Module or as a supplement to an existing case in I/LEADS.
- O. ALPR generated data will be maintained on the server for a period not to exceed 365 days without specific authorization of the Chief of Police. The purpose of the retention period is to increase protection of the community by providing an investigative tool to aid in the detection or investigation of terrorism or series of related crimes.

VII. EXTERNAL DISSEMINATION of ALPR DATA

- A. Requests for secondary dissemination of information to outside law enforcement agencies shall be made to any commander who will either approve or deny the request based on the validity of the request which must be supported by a specific law enforcement need. Law enforcement agencies making a request for ALPR information must complete an ALPR Secondary Dissemination Form. Each form will contain the following information:
 - 1. The date and time the form was received
 - 2. The name and department of the requestor
 - 3. The purpose for which the ALPR data was requested including the agency's case number.
 - 4. A description of the ALPR data disseminated
 - 5. The date and time the information was released
 - 6. The identity of the individual to whom the information was released, including agency and contact information
 - 7. The name of the person processing the request
 - 8. The final status of the request (APPROVED or DENIED)
- B. The Crime Analyst Program director will maintain a secondary dissemination file which will contain completed ALPR Secondary Dissemination Forms and a copy of any information that was provided. ALPR Secondary Dissemination Forms and associated released file shall be retained electronically for a minimum of three years.
- C. Third party dissemination rules shall not apply to any law enforcement agency within the National Capital Region (NCR) having an MOU which grants access to Fairfax County ALPR files. Automatic data access will be facilitated by ITB for approved MOUs.

- D. Given special circumstances, Department authorized public and/or private entities offering assistance with regard to a high profile case or specific investigation may be provided corresponding ALPR data upon authorization from the Chief of Police or his designee, for the sole purpose of furthering the investigation. The data shall be destroyed by the receiving party when it becomes no longer relevant to the initial investigative need.
- E. All other requests for ALPR information shall be in accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). FOIA requests are time sensitive and shall immediately be forwarded to the Inspections Division of the Internal Affairs Bureau.

VIII. DEPLOYMENT

- A. ALPR equipped vehicles may be used during routine patrol operations or for special operations by personnel properly trained in the use of ALPR. The role of the ALPR in special operations shall be outlined in the operations plan, and reviewed by a supervisor or commander.
- B. Operation of police vehicles equipped with ALPR shall be in accordance with General Order 501.1, Operation of Police Vehicles.
- C. ALPR Systems shall be inspected prior to operation.
- D. Supervisors should make every effort to deploy ALPR equipped vehicles, and when deployed, the units will be identified in I/NetDispatcher and on squad lineups.

IX. MAINTENANCE

- A. When ALPR equipment is removed from the vehicle for any reason it shall be placed in its protective case to prevent accidental damage.
- B. ALPR cameras shall be removed from vehicles prior to entering an automatic car washing facility.
- C. ALPR camera lenses may be cleaned with glass cleaner or mild soap and water.
- D. Damage to ALPR equipment shall be immediately reported to a first line supervisor. The supervisor shall document the damage in the form of a memorandum to the Logistics and Property Division director through his

respective commander. Copies of all documentation shall be faxed to the Resource Management Bureau (RMB) by the end of shift.

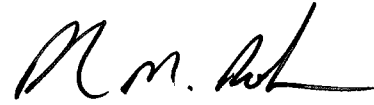
- E. No alterations or repairs of any kind shall be made to ALPR equipment or software.
- F. The Logistics and Property Division of the RMB shall be notified of any ALPR equipment needing maintenance or repair. RMB will coordinate all maintenance and repair with the appropriate vendor.

X. ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The system administrator of the ELSAG Operations Center is housed in the Patrol Bureau. The functions of Diagnostics, Query / Statistics, Hot List Management, User Configuration, Software Management, Data Mining, Parameters Management and Role Management will be determined by Patrol Bureau.
- B. Server maintenance, software updates, and security of data are the responsibility of the Patrol Bureau with technical assistance from the Information Technology Bureau as needed.
- C. Functionality issues with ELSAG software on the MCT shall be examined by the CAD Tech Support at PSTOC.
- D. Installation, maintenance, and tracking of ALPR equipment are the responsibility of Logistics and Property Division director.
- E. The station logistics technicians will be responsible for coordinating the installation, tracking, maintenance; and coordinating the repair of software and hardware issues of ALPR equipment with the respective entities named above.

This SOP becomes effective January 1, 2011, and rescinds all previous rules and regulations pertaining to the subject.

Issued by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. M. [unclear]". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chief of Police