



Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office

General Order: 22.11

Subject: License Plate Readers (LPR)

Revised: 06/24/2024

This policy consists of the following sections:

A. Purpose

B. Discussion

C. Definitions

D. Procedures

E. User Training

F. LPR Trailers

G. Learn Database

H. Hot Plate Management

I. Evidence Retention

J. Success Story Documentation

A. Purpose

The purpose of this General Order is to provide Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office personnel with guidelines and principles for the collection, access, use, dissemination, retention, and purging of License Plate Reader (LPR) information to ensure that the information is used for law enforcement purposes only and that the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of individuals are not violated.

B. Discussion

In 2021 the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) implemented the use of a License Plate Reader (LPR) System by Flock Safety in order to increase the agency's effectiveness in locating and detecting stolen vehicles and missing or wanted person(s). LPRs use image-processing technology to identify vehicles by their license plates. Using optical character recognition (OCR), the LPR's software transforms pixels of the digital image of a license plate. These images, known as tag detections, are then compared to various databases, such as NCIC, and agency created records, known as hot plates, for matches or tag hits. Authorized users are alerted to the tag hits and provided an electronic notification that includes an image of the vehicle, the tag and the unconfirmed tag hit. It is incumbent upon the user who receives this hit to confirm all aspects of the information prior to taking any action. The tag detections are stored in systems maintained by Flock Safety. Tag detections are loaded into these systems by commercial and government based LPR Systems. Users can query

searches for specific or partial tag numbers or search a specified geographic area for tag detections. LPR Systems may be deployed on trailers or on fixed camera locations.

C. Definitions

1. Confirmed Tag Hit – A tag hit that has been properly vetted by the user. This includes verifying what tag was read, what the tag was interpreted as, and confirming the validity of the associated hit.
2. Hot Plate – License plate associated with vehicles of interest from an associated database such as the National Criminal Information Center (NCIC) or from a local source including agency generated hot lists.
3. License Plate Reader (LPR) – A device that uses cameras and computer technology to compare digital images of license plates to lists of known plates of interest, also known as tag hits.
4. LPR Administrator – The agency member(s) tasked with administrating the LPR Program.
5. LPR Trailer – A disguised trailer fitted with an LPR System.
6. Fixed LPR system- A stationary LPR system that is attached to a fixed asset within OCSO's jurisdiction.
7. Success Story – Any incident initiated by the LPR system which requires documentation.
8. Tag Detection – A digital record of tag scanned by an LPR.
9. Tag Hit – An alert from the LPR System that a scanned tag (tag detection) 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, or terrorist-related activity.

D. Procedures

1. LPR Management and Access Guidelines

a. LPR System Intended Usage

- I. The provisions of this policy are provided to support authorized uses of LPR information. Authorized use may include the following based on operational needs of the agency and at the discretion of the LPR Administrator(s).
 - i. Alert authorized users a particular license plate on a "hot list" is in close proximity to a LPR to dramatically reduce the recovery time of stolen vehicles and / or assist in locating dangerous, wanted, or missing subjects.
 - ii. Identify plates associated with potential witnesses and / or victims of violent crime.
 - iii. Identify plates linked to stolen motor vehicles or stolen tags.
 - iv. Provide situational awareness for law enforcement related to public safety or otherwise relevant to their authorized duties.
 - v. Support the agency's response to critical incidents and special events.
 - vi. Support enforcement operations such high crime area patrols, gang investigations, DUI Initiatives, enforcement details, directed patrols, or any other official investigative action.

b. LPR System Guidelines

- I. LPR's and all of the systems' related functions shall be used for official purposes only by sworn or civilian members of OCSO who have been properly trained in the use of the equipment and related programs.

II. Access to the LPR system will be managed by the LPR Administrator(s), or designee. Levels of access will be controlled based on operational needs of the agency. The LPR Administrator(s), or their designee, will manage LPR accounts and filter access to program features on an as needed basis. Accounts will be granted for official use only.

III. A tag hit by an LPR database does not establish probable cause for an arrest or stop in and of itself. When a user discovers a tag hit it is their responsibility to confirm the hit is valid and is associated with the correct vehicle prior to taking any law enforcement action. NOTE: The LPR system does not distinguish tags by state and there are duplicate tags between states.

c. LPR System Management / Responsibilities

I. LPR Administrator – oversees complete system management to include:

- i. Coordinate with District Lieutenants, District Commanders, and/or Community Resource Deputies (LPR Deployment Specialists) for deployment locations.
- ii. Coordinate with Information Technology Bureau for system repairs and software updates.
- iii. Coordinate with Fleet Services Division for trailer maintenance.

d. LPR Deployment Specialists – deploy LPR trailers to assigned locations, to include:

I. Community Resource Deputies (CRD) are assigned LPR Deployment Specialist and have the necessary access to update the GPS location(s) of all LPR trailers.

e. Crime Analyst Unit / Real Time Crime Center – oversees data analysis, to include:

- I. Provide LPR Trailer Deployment Recommendation reports, as requested by a CRD or agency supervisor.
- II. Image retrieval for evidentiary value.
- III. Enters data into CAD regarding active criminal intelligence that is collected through Flock and Fusus databases.
- IV. Communicate, via radio communications, with responding deputies to provide real-time information that is collected through Flock and Fusus databases.

f. Information Technology– oversees:

- I. Asset and budget assignment for the LPR system.
- II. IT will be the single contact to the vendor.

g. Fleet Services Division – oversees the mechanical readiness of the LPR trailers, to include:

- I. Tires, frame, batteries and all mechanical systems- these items will be scheduled and documented through Fleet.
- II. Budget for vehicle maintenance supply.

E. User Training

1. Training in the use of the LPR System will be based on the level of access required by the agency member and will be conducted online by Flock Safety.

a. Basic User Access – Members with this level of access will be required to review online training that covers search features of Flock Safety. This training is available on-line through Flock Safety.

- b. Analyst Access – Members with this level of access will be trained in the use of the various search features of Flock Safety. Additionally, they will be trained in the creation, uploading and management of Hot Plates.
- c. Custom Access – The LPR Administrator(s) may create customized access for agency members as needed for official business. These users will be trained in all facets of hot plate uploads.

F. LPR Trailers

1. The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office maintains LPR trailers that may be deployed throughout the county as deemed operationally necessary.
 - a. LPR Deployment Specialists will coordinate the placement of LPR trailers based on requests and operational needs of the agency components.
 - b. The LPR trailers will be moved by members who have received proper training. This training includes proper trailering techniques, location assessment, and proper deployment techniques of the LPR trailers.
 - c. Once an LPR trailer has been deployed, it is the responsibility of the LPR Deployment Specialist who deploys the LPR trailer to update the LPR coordinates.
 - d. When a user receives a tag hit, they will confirm the validity of the hit prior to taking any action. Once the hit is confirmed the user will advise the Communications Center of the hit and direct appropriate support to affect a stop.
 - e. LPR Trailer Tag Hit Protocol
 - I. Tag hits detected by LPR trailers will alert any user logged on to Flock Safety of the hit.
 - II. Members who receive a tag hit must confirm the tag hit prior to taking law enforcement action. Confirmation includes visually verifying the tag detection with the tag hit and verifying the tag characters that were translated match the tag hit characters. The tag hit will be compared against what vehicle was captured during the tag detection to include a match of the make, model and state of the tag. The tag hit itself will then be verified within whatever system it was generated in (i.e. NCIC). Once these steps have been taken and the hit has been verified the tag hit can be considered a confirmed tag hit.
 - III. Once the tag hit has been confirmed the OCSO member will advise the Communication Center of the confirmed tag hit and appropriate resources will be directed to the last know location and direction of travel of the vehicle in question based on the location of the LPR trailer. The level of response by OCSO will be commensurate with the type of tag hit detected.

G. Learn Database

1. Authorized agency members have access to the LEARN Database. This database contains records of any and all tag detections provided by commercial and government partners who use the system. This information is historical by nature, but could be actionable based on when a tag detection was scanned. In addition, the quality of a tag detection can vary from system to system and must factor into the decision to act upon a tag hit discovered in the database.
 - a. Access to the LEARN Database shall be granted by the LPR Administrator, or designee. The level of access will be determined based on operational needs. This includes what features may be accessed by the user.
 - b. LEARN Database Access Levels & Use

I. Mobile LPR System Users – Members who are assigned Mobile LPR Systems will have a user profile within the LEARN Database that grants them access to view Hot Tag Hits, NCIC Hits, and Stolen Vehicle Hits. They will utilize a proprietary program from LEARN designed for Mobile LPR Units. They will also have access to the TAS Client.

II. Communication Center Staff – Designated positions within the Communications Center will have access to the TAS Client for purposes of monitoring LPR Systems employed by the agency and any other partners as deemed necessary by LPR Administrator, or designee.

III. Crime Analysts / Real Time Crime Center – Members of Crime Analyst Unit will have full access to the LEARN Database and any of its related features. This will include the ability to upload hot plates.

IV. Patrol Operations Bureau – Patrol deputies will have access to the LEARN Database and the TAS Client. The filter features will be preselected by the LPR Administrator(s) to display NCIC Hits, stolen vehicles, missing person(s), and Hot Plates only.

V. Criminal Investigations Section– Authorized members of CIS will have full access to the LEARN Database and the TAS Client. Requests to upload Hot Plates will be forwarded to the Crime Analyst Unit / Real Time Crime Center.

c. LEARN Database Tag Hit Protocol

I. If while searching the LEARN database an authorized user discovers a stolen vehicle hit, that supervisor will verify the tag matches the stolen vehicle information.

i. If the verified hit is located within the primary service area of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, the user will contact the Communication Center and have an OCSO deputy dispatched to the location.

ii. If the verified hit is located within the jurisdiction of a city within Okaloosa County that has its own law enforcement agency, the user will contact the communications center for that agency and provide them with any and all details regarding the hit.

H. Hot Plate Management

1. Authorized members may enter tag numbers into Flock Safety and the LEARN Database as "Hot Plates." This feature allows the creation of tag hits for the Hot Plate for a variety of purposes.

a. The Crime Analyst Unit / Real Time Crime Center will manage the entry and retention of Hot Plates in the LEARN Database. Requests for hot plate uploads will be forwarded to the appropriate Crime Analyst after supervisory approval is obtained by the requesting member.

I. All members of Crime Analyst Unit will receive proper training in Flock Safety and the LEARN Database prior to making entries.

II. Only license plates related to felony cases will be used for hot plates. Exceptions will be determined on a case by case basis with supervisory approval.

b. Hot Plates will have a thirty (30) Day standard expiration. Upon expiration the Hot Plate will be reviewed by the Crime Analyst Unit for an extension.

c. Hot Plates will be removed from Flock Safety and the LEARN Database once their investigative purpose has been achieved.

- d. Specified law enforcement members may be granted program permission to upload Hot Plates on an as needed basis.
- e. Hot Plates created by the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office will be used for official law enforcement purposes only.

I. Evidence Retention

- 1. If a member of OCSO locates a vehicle as a result of an ALPR deployment, the agency member will activate their agency issued Body Worn Camera (BWC) to document the incident.
- 2. Following the activation of an agency members BWC, that does not require an offense number or that is non-criminal in nature, the agency member shall be retained in Evidence.com for a period of ninety (90) days.
- 3. Any evidence that is obtained through an APLR deployment, or the collection of evidence through any of the ALPR databases, related to a criminal case or investigation, shall be retained in Evidence.com indefinitely.
- 4. FLOCK Safety shall retain ALPR records in accordance with their company policy and/or procedure(s). It is incumbent upon the ALPR operator ensure the data is properly captured through PDF format and stored in Evidence.com.
- 5. Vigilant Solutions shall retain ALPR commercial records in accordance with their company policy and/or procedure(s). It is incumbent upon the ALPR operator ensure the data is properly captured through PDF format and stored in Evidence.com.

J. Success Story Documentation

- 1. If a report is generated as a result of a Fixed LPR, LPR trailer, or Mobile LPR hit, the following procedure should be followed:
 - a. Code the designated call with disposition Code 6 "ALPR".
 - b. Notate the use of the LPR system in the End of Shift Report to ensure the Success Story is documented.

Approved:  /s/
Eric A. Aden, Sheriff