

## Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)

### 427.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the capture, storage, access, and use of digital data obtained through the use of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore Police Department (UMBPD) utilizes ALPR technology to enhance law enforcement operations, assist in the identification and recovery of stolen vehicles and license plates, locate wanted or missing persons, and support criminal investigations and various law enforcement activities, while safeguarding the privacy rights of law-abiding citizens.

This policy establishes procedures for the responsible deployment, operation, and oversight of ALPR systems consistent with Maryland law and applicable privacy protections. ALPRs shall not be used to monitor First Amendment-protected activities (e.g., protests, religious services, academic events) unless there is an articulable and documented official law enforcement purpose.

#### 427.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Alarm (ALPR Hit)** - An audible or visual alert generated by an ALPR system indicating that a scanned license plate matches a license plate contained in a hotlist or alert database.

**ALPR Operator** - A sworn member of the department who has received department-approved training and is authorized to operate ALPR equipment.

**Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) / License Plate Recognition (LPR)** - A system consisting of cameras, computer hardware, and software that captures images of license plates, converts them into alphanumeric characters, and compares the data against law enforcement databases or hotlists.

**Criminal Justice Information (CJI)** – Information protected under CJIS security policy, including NCIC and state CJIS returns accessed via ALPR queries.

**Historical Data** – Any data collected by an ALPR system and stored by or for UMBPD, including data stored through cloud services.

**Hotlist** - An electronic list of license plates associated with stolen vehicles, wanted persons, alerts, or other law enforcement interests that will trigger an ALPR alarm.

**Legitimate Law Enforcement Purpose** – The investigation, detection, or analysis of a crime; enforcement of Maryland vehicle laws; terrorist activity detection; or the location of missing or endangered persons, as defined by Md. Code Ann., Public Safety § 3#509.

**Mobile ALPR System** - ALPR equipment mounted on a patrol vehicle designed to scan license plates while officers conduct routine patrol or traffic enforcement.

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**Personally Identifiable Information (PII)** – Any data that identifies or describes an individual, including plate data linked to an identifiable person.

**Read** - The process by which an ALPR system photographs a license plate, converts the image into alphanumeric data, and compares it to a hotlist.

**Statewide LPR Systems** – LPR systems that are networked with the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC) Operations Center server through an encrypted Virtual Private Network.

**Verification** – Review of the captured plate image and confirmation through official databases (e.g., NCIC/MVA), documented prior to enforcement when practicable.

### **427.2 POLICY**

The policy of the UMBPD is to utilize ALPR technology to capture and store digital license plate data and images while safeguarding the established privacy rights of law-abiding citizens. ALPR systems and all data derived from them are for the official use of UMBPD only. All ALPR data constitutes confidential law enforcement information and is not subject to public inspection. Misuse, unauthorized access, disclosure, or dissemination of ALPR data is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, termination, and/or criminal prosecution.

### **427.3 ADMINISTRATION**

#### **427.3.1 USE AUTHORIZATION**

ALPR systems shall be used only for legitimate law enforcement purposes as defined by Maryland law.

- A. ALPR technology allows for the automated detection and capture of license plate images and associated vehicle data. The system converts license plate images into searchable data used to identify vehicles associated with criminal activity or law enforcement alerts.
- B. ALPR technology may be used for official law enforcement purposes including, but not limited to:
  1. Identifying stolen vehicles or license plates
  2. Locating wanted persons
  3. Locating missing or endangered persons
  4. Criminal investigations
  5. Traffic enforcement
  6. Homeland security operations
  7. Electronic surveillance authorized by law
  8. Suspect interdiction
  9. Recovery of stolen property
  10. Investigative canvassing during major incidents

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427.3.2 ALPR PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Chief of Police will appoint and designate an ALPR Program Administrator, who will be responsible for overseeing the department's ALPR Program. Responsibilities include:
  - 1. Managing the installation, deployment, and maintenance of ALPR equipment
  - 2. Managing ALPR data retention and system access
  - 3. Coordinating software and hardware upgrades
  - 4. Ensuring system functionality and troubleshooting
  - 5. Coordinating training for ALPR operators
  - 6. Ensuring compliance with department policy and applicable laws
  - 7. Conducting or assigning system audits
  - 8. Serving as the department liaison with the Maryland State Police (MSP) and MCAC regarding information sharing
  - 9. Ensuring compliance with Maryland statutory reporting requirements
- B. The ALPR Program Administrator may designate personnel to manage the day-to-day operation of ALPR systems and related data.
- C. The Program Administrator or authorized designee may immediately suspend a user's ALPR access upon suspected misuse and shall initiate an inquiry with the Internal Affairs Section.

427.3.3 SHIFT SUPERVISOR (SERGEANT/OIC) RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Ensure the hotlists are updated twice daily at 0630 and 1330 hours
  - 1. Lieutenants, Sergeants, and OICs assigned to Patrol, along with other members designated by the ALPR Program Administrator, will be granted credentials to assess the hotlist database.
  - 2. Login credentials have been issued to UMBPD by the Maryland State Police (MSP) and are intended for use exclusively by authorized UMBPD personnel. These credentials are for UMBPD authorized members only.
  - 3. The Center for Information Technology Services (CITS) will install software on designated computers to allow authorized members to access and update the databases.
- B. Ensure ALPR equipment is used in accordance with department policy
- C. Verify personnel operating ALPR systems have completed required training before using the system
- D. Ensure officers verify ALPR alerts before enforcement action
- E. Ensure enforcement actions resulting from ALPR alerts are documented in the applicable case report or CAD entry
- F. Notify the chain of command of significant incidents resulting from ALPR alerts

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- G. Ensure equipment deficiencies are reported promptly

**427.3.4 ALPR OPERATORS**

- A. Use ALPR technology only for official law enforcement purposes
- B. Ensure equipment is functioning properly prior to deployment and documented on the daily inspection form
- C. Verify ALPR alerts before taking enforcement action
- D. Document enforcement actions resulting from ALPR alerts
- E. Report system malfunctions or equipment damage
- F. Operators must maintain safe driving practices; ALPR alerts shall not be read while the vehicle is in motion

**427.3.5 COMMUNICATIONS SECTION**

- A. Verify the license plate through the appropriate databases such as NCIC, MVA, or other law enforcement systems when an officer requests confirmation of an ALPR alert
- B. Provide the officer with the confirmation status
- C. Broadcast relevant information to assisting unit when necessary

**427.4 OPERATIONS**

Use of an ALPR is restricted to the purposes outlined below. Department members shall not use, or allow others to use, the equipment or database records for any unauthorized purpose.

- A. An ALPR shall only be used for official law enforcement business (Md. Code PS § 3-509).
- B. 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.
- C. While an ALPR may be used to canvass license plates around any crime scene, particular consideration should be given to using ALPR-equipped vehicles to canvass areas around homicides, shootings and other major incidents. Partial license plates reported during major crimes should be entered into the ALPR system in an attempt to identify suspect vehicles, but must be approved by the Shift Supervisor.
- D. No member of this department shall operate ALPR equipment or access ALPR data without first completing department-approved training.
- E. No ALPR operator may access confidential department, state or federal data unless authorized to do so.
- F. If practicable, the officer should verify an ALPR response through the appropriate official law enforcement database before taking enforcement action that is based solely on an ALPR alert.

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427.4.1 PRE-DEPLOYMENT PROCEDURES

Prior to using an ALPR-equipped patrol vehicle, officers shall:

- A. Inspect ALPR cameras and system components for damage or obstruction.
- B. Ensure the system powers on and operates correctly.
- C. Confirm the hot list database has been updated.
- D. Confirm GPS functionality if required by the system.
- E. Ensure the mobile data terminal (MDT) is operational.

427.4.2 ROUTINE OPERATIONS

- A. ALPR systems may be used during routine patrol and traffic enforcement operations.
- B. Officers operating ALPR-equipped vehicles should:
  1. Patrol areas with normal traffic flow
  2. Avoid obstructing the cameras with equipment or vehicle components
  3. Monitor the mobile workstation for alerts while maintaining safe vehicle operation
  4. Use ALPR as an investigative tool while maintaining situational awareness
- C. ALPR systems may scan license plates automatically while the vehicle is in motion or stationary.

427.4.3 ALPR ALERT (HIT) RESPONSE PROCEDURES

When an ALPR alert is received, officers shall:

**Step 1 - Review Alert**

- A. Review the license plate image captured by the ALPR system.
- B. Compare the image to the license plate information associated with the alert.

**Step 2 - Confirm Information**

- A. Confirm the license plate information through official databases when practicable.
- B. Officers may request confirmation from the Communications Center.

**Step 3 - Notify Dispatch**

Provide dispatch with:

- A. License plate number
- B. Vehicle description
- C. Location and direction of travel
- D. Nature of the alert (e.g., stolen vehicle, wanted person)

If the alert is confirmed, officers shall take enforcement action consistent with department policy and applicable law.

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An ALPR alert **alone does not establish probable cause** and must be verified before enforcement action is executed.

### 427.4.4 MAJOR INCIDENT DEPLOYMENT

- A. ALPR-equipped vehicles may be strategically deployed during major incidents including:
  - 1. Homicides
  - 2. Shootings
  - 3. Robberies
  - 4. Missing person investigations
  - 5. Vehicle theft investigations
- B. Supervisors may assign ALPR-equipped patrol units to patrol areas where a suspect vehicle is likely to travel.
- C. Supervisors may request assistance from the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center to determine whether a suspect vehicle has previously been detected by ALPR systems in other jurisdictions.

### 427.4.5 EMERGENCY ALERTS

- A. ALPR systems may assist in locating vehicles associated with:
  - 1. AMBER Alerts
  - 2. Silver Alerts
  - 3. Blue Alerts
  - 4. Violent crime suspects
- B. Information associated with these alerts may be entered into statewide ALPR systems to assist in vehicle detection.

### 427.4.6 TERRORIST OR WATCH LIST ALERTS

- A. If an ALPR alert involves a terrorist or national security watch list:
  - 1. Dispatch should broadcast a **Be On the Lookout (BOLO)** for the vehicle without referencing the watch list classification.
  - 2. Officers shall confirm the alert through official databases.
  - 3. Supervisors shall be notified immediately.
  - 4. Appropriate federal or state authorities shall be contacted as required.
- B. Officers shall follow guidance provided by intelligence authorities regarding response procedures.

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**427.5 HOTLIST MANAGEMENT**

- A. Hotlists are electronic databases of license plates associated with criminal activity or alerts.
- B. ALPR operators shall ensure that the system's hotlist is updated prior to deployment whenever possible.
- C. Hotlists may include information related to:
  - 1. Stolen vehicles
  - 2. Stolen license plates
  - 3. Wanted persons
  - 4. AMBER Alerts
  - 5. Silver Alerts
  - 6. Blue Alerts
  - 7. Other law enforcement alerts
- D. If additional license plate information must be added between scheduled updates:
  - 1. The requesting officer must ensure the entry serves a legitimate law enforcement purpose.
  - 2. The entry must be documented in the CAD system or case report.
  - 3. The information shall be removed once it is no longer needed by the requesting officer.

**427.6 MOBILE ALPR SYSTEMS**

- A. Mobile ALPR systems may be installed in patrol vehicles used for routine patrol and traffic enforcement.
- B. Supervisors responsible for ALPR-equipped vehicles shall:
  - 1. Ensure equipment is properly deployed and maintained
  - 2. Ensure personnel operating ALPR equipment are properly trained
  - 3. Ensure significant incidents or arrests resulting from ALPR alerts are documented
  - 4. Ensure ALPR equipment is inspected during vehicle inspections
  - 5. Report equipment deficiencies immediately through the chain of command
- C. When a license plate is scanned, the system will compare the captured data against hot lists and other available law enforcement databases.
- D. If a potential match is detected, the ALPR system will generate an alert for the operator to review.

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**427.7 ALARM VERIFICATION**

- A. ALPR alerts must be verified prior to enforcement action whenever practicable.
- B. Officers receiving an ALPR alert should:
  - 1. Review the digital image of the license plate captured by the ALPR system.
  - 2. Compare the image with the license plate information associated with the alert.
  - 3. Verify the information through appropriate law enforcement databases (e.g., NCIC, MVA, or other official systems).
  - 4. Notify dispatch when verification assistance is needed.
- C. An ALPR alert should be treated as an investigative lead and not as sole probable cause for enforcement action.

**427.8 DATA COLLECTION AND RETENTION**

The ALPR Program Administrator or designee is responsible for ensuring systems and processes are in place for the proper collection and retention of ALPR data. Data will be transferred from vehicles to the designated storage in accordance with department procedures.

All stored ALPR data should be retained in accordance with the established records retention schedule. Thereafter, ALPR data should be purged unless it has become, or it is reasonable to believe it will become, evidence in a criminal or civil action or is subject to a discovery request or other lawful action to produce records. In those circumstances, the applicable data should be downloaded onto portable media and booked into evidence.

**427.9 DATA OWNERSHIP AND VENDOR RESTRICTIONS**

- A. Ownership:
  - 1. All ALPR data, including historical data, is the sole property of UMBPD.
- B. Prohibited Uses:
  - 1. ALPR data shall not be:
    - (a) Sold, licensed, leased, or commercialized;
    - (b) Used for non-law enforcement purposes;
    - (c) Accessed by Axon except upon express written authorization by the Chief of Police or designee;
    - (d) Sublicensed or shared by a vendor.
- C. Vendor Access:
  - 1. Axon shall:
    - (a) Access data only when expressly authorized;
    - (b) Maintain CJIS compliant security standards;
    - (c) Prohibit secondary use or retention of ALPR data.

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**427.10 ACCOUNTABILITY, AUDITS, AND BREACH RESPONSE**

**427.10.1 ACCESS CONTROLS**

All ALPR systems shall employ role based access controls and automated logging to document user identity, date, time, and purpose of access.

**427.10.2 AUDITS**

- A. The ALPR Program Administrator shall ensure that all required ALPR usage, retention, audit, and breach information is provided to the Maryland State Police and MCAC to support the annual legislative report due on or before March 1 of each year.
- B. The ALPR Program Administrator or designee shall compile ALPR usage statistics and submit quarterly audit reports to the Chief of Police, in addition to preparing and submitting the annual report due on or before March 1st of each year.
- C. Audits shall include:
  - 1. Individual officer queries
  - 2. Supervisory approvals
  - 3. Inter-agency requests
- D. Audit results shall be documented and retained per records retention requirements.

**427.11 RELEASING ALPR DATA**

Information gathered by the ALPR, including personally identifiable and criminal justice information, is not subject to disclosure under the Public Information Act (Md. Code PS § 3-509). The ALPR data may be shared only with other law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies for official law enforcement purposes or as otherwise permitted by law, using the following procedures:

- A. The agency makes a written request for the ALPR data that includes:
  - 1. The name of the agency.
  - 2. The name of the person requesting.
  - 3. The intended purpose of obtaining the information.
- B. The request is reviewed by the ALPR Program Administrator or the authorized designee and approved before the request is fulfilled.
- C. The approved request is retained on file in accordance with the department's retention schedule.
- D. Requests for ALPR data by non-law enforcement or non-prosecutorial agencies will be processed as provided in the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.
- E. UMBPD shall not upload, mirror, or allow automated access to its ALPR databases by any outside agency or entity, whether inside or outside Maryland, except for databases owned or operated by the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC).

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**427.12 TRAINING**

- A. The Education and Training Section will be responsible for ensuring all ALPR operators complete department-approved training prior to operating ALPR equipment.
- B. Training shall include:
  - 1. System operation
  - 2. Legal considerations
  - 3. Data privacy protections
  - 4. Alarm verification procedures
  - 5. Documentation requirements
- C. Refresher training may be required as needed.