



Somerville Police Department 		TYPE: GENERAL ORDER		POLICY NUMBER: 101			
		Subject: License Plate Recognition (LPR)					
		Issuing Authority: David Fallon Chief of Police		Signature: 		Effective Date: April 29, 2015	
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Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the proper use and application of license plate recognition (LPR) systems, the management of the data, and the maintenance of the equipment.

Policy

The availability and use of LPR systems have provided many opportunities for the enhancement of law enforcement agencies' productivity, effectiveness, and protection of public and officer safety. It is the policy of the Somerville Police Department to use the technology only in furtherance of official and legitimate law enforcement operations and public safety.

Definitions

Alert – A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the LPR system receives a potential hit on a license plate.

Alert Data – Information captured by an LPR relating to a license plate that matches the license plate on a hot list.

LPR – License Plate Recognition technology uses high-speed cameras combined with sophisticated computer algorithms capable of converting the images of license plates to electronically readable data. The LPR system captures an image of a license plate and converts it to a text file using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology. The technology also compares the digital images of license plates to the CJIS-NCIC Hot File database.

LPR Data – Scan files, alert data, and any other documents or data generated by, or obtained through, use of the LPR system.

LPR Data Query Logs – A record of a search or query of LPR data.

LPR System – The LPR camera and all associated equipment and databases.

Hit – An alert that a license plate matches a record maintained in the LPR database related to stolen vehicles, wanted vehicles, or other alert type files that support investigation or which have been manually registered by a user for further investigation.

Hot List – License plate numbers of vehicles of interest, such as stolen vehicles, unregistered vehicles, vehicles owned by persons of interest, and vehicles associated with AMBER Alerts, Missing Child Alerts, Missing College Student Bulletins, Be On Look Out (BOLO), Attempt To Locate (ATL), and Wanted or Missing Person broadcasts or bulletins in which a license plate number is included, or other license plate numbers of interest entered by the department or an authorized officer.

Hot List Download – The method by which the hot list data is transferred to a computer within a law enforcement vehicle.

Mobile LPR System – LPR cameras that are affixed, either permanently (hardwired) or temporarily (e.g., magnet-mounted), to a law enforcement vehicle for mobile deployment.

OCR – Optical Character Recognition. The technology that supports the automated reading and digitizing of images of license plates that are captured by the LPR system.

Procedures

1. General

- A. LPR systems and associated equipment and databases are the property of the department and authorized for official use only. Misuse of this equipment and associated databases or data may be subject to sanctions and/or disciplinary actions, as determined by the rules and regulations of the department.

2. Administration

- A. The department shall designate an employee(s) in a command position with administrative oversight as the LPR Administrator for the LPR system deployment, operations, and maintenance. The LPR Administrator, or a designee, shall be responsible for the following:
 - 1. Establishing protocols for access, collection, storage, and retention of LPR data and associated media files.
 - 2. Establishing protocols to preserve and document LPR reads and “alerts” or “hits” that are acted on in the field or associated with investigations or prosecutions.
 - 3. Establishing protocols to establish and ensure the security and integrity of data captured, stored, and/or retained by the LPR system.

4. Ensuring the proper selection of the personnel approved to operate the LPR system and maintaining an adequate number of trained and authorized users.
 5. Maintaining records identifying approved LPR deployments and documenting the results, including appropriate documentation of significant incidents and arrests that are related to LPR usage.
 6. Authorizing any requests for LPR systems use or data access according to the policies and guidelines of this agency.
 7. Managing and securing the data, including requests for searches of the LPR data, hot lists, and backing up the LPR data.
 8. Ensuring that designated, trained personnel check equipment on a regular basis to ensure functionality and camera alignment and removing from service any equipment that falls outside expected functionality until deficiencies have been corrected.
- B.** LPR systems repairs (hardware or software) shall be made by department-authorized sources.

3. License Plate Recognition System Usage

- A.** LPR systems and information shall be accessed and used only for official and legitimate law enforcement operations and public safety related purposes, and may only be used based on specific and articulable facts of a concern for safety, wrongdoing, criminal investigations, department-related civil investigations, or pursuant to a court order.
- B.** Searches of historical LPR data shall be done in accordance with established departmental policies and procedures.
- C.** Only users who have been designated by the LPR Administrator and properly trained in the use and operational protocols of the LPR system shall be permitted to use the system. Only those users with an approved login and password will be allowed access to the LPR system.
- D.** The agency's LPR Administrator shall ensure that any changes in hardware, software, policy, or law are the subject of continuing in-service training or bulletins.
- E.** The use of LPR technology must be approved by the Chief or his/her designee.
- F.** When an enforcement action, investigation, or prosecution results from an LPR hit, the hit will be preserved.
- G.** LPR hot lists and data gathered by departmental LPRs will be maintained securely.

- H. Requests for searches of LPR data to the LPR Administrator may be made by members of this department or by other law enforcement agencies subject to the provisions of this policy.

4. Operational Procedures

- A. At the start of each shift, users shall ensure that the LPR system has been updated with the most current hot lists available.
- B. At the beginning of each shift, users should verify the aim of the LPR camera(s) to ensure it is focused on the correct lanes of traffic.
- C. LPR equipment should be cleaned and maintained according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- D. Any damage to LPR systems will be reported immediately according to the department's established policy and procedures related to the loss of, or damage to, the department's equipment.
- E. When not in use, LPR-equipped vehicles should be secured.
- F. The user shall notify the LPR Administrator of any malfunction of the LPR.

5. Manual Entry of Data

- A. Users may become aware of additional potential license plate numbers of interest and may request those license plate numbers be entered into the department hot list. License plates may be entered only when directed or authorized by the Chief or his/her designee and only for official and legitimate law enforcement or public safety operations.
- B. A second-party check must be conducted on all manual entries.
- C. Manual entries may include, but should not be limited to, an AMBER Alert, Missing Child Alert, Missing College Student Bulletin, Be On Look Out (BOLO), Attempt To Locate (ATL), or Wanted or Missing Person broadcast or bulletin in which a license plate number is included. Such manual entries must be manually updated when the information changes or is no longer current.
- D. Whenever a plate is manually entered into the LPR system, the officer shall document the reason.

6. LPR Alerts/Hits

- A. Before initiation of a stop based on a hit or alert:

1. Users shall visually verify that the vehicle plate number matches the plate number run by the LPR system, including both alphanumeric characters of the license plate and the state of issuance.
2. Users shall verify the current status of the plate through the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS), National Crime Information Center (NCIC), Department's Records Management System (RMS), or other appropriate source of data before a stop, when circumstances allow, or as soon as practicable.

Information Management

1. LPR Data Query Logs

- A. An automated log will be maintained for each transaction that will include the name of the individual accessing the data, along with the date and time of access.
- B. Requests to review stored LPR data and search results will be recorded and maintained in appropriate case files as determined by the rules and regulations of the department.
- C. LPR Data Query Logs shall be maintained and secured.
- D. Audits shall be conducted at the discretion of the Chief or his/her designee.

2. LPR Data Sharing and Dissemination

- A. LPR data can be accessed, retrieved, or shared for official and legitimate law enforcement operations or public safety purposes only.
- B. Dissemination of LPR data outside the department shall be documented in a secondary dissemination log, as determined by the rules and regulations of the department.
- C. Information sharing among law enforcement agencies, other than the DCJIS, should be governed by departmental policies or memoranda of understanding.

3. Retention

- A. Data from LPRs will be transferred/uploaded to the department's server at a time to be determined by the LPR Administrator. Data captured by the LPR will be purged once the upload to the department server is complete.
- B. All LPR data may be stored in the department's server for a period of thirty (30) days, except that data may be stored for longer than thirty (30) days in the following circumstances:
 1. Alert data associated with an enforcement action, investigation, or prosecution shall be maintained until a final disposition has been reached in the particular case.

2. Alert data associated with an arrest will be maintained in the criminal case file and retained for the maximum period of time associated with such record.
3. Alert data associated with criminal investigations will be maintained in the criminal case file and retained for the maximum period associated with such record.
4. If it is reasonable to believe that the LPR data will be used as evidence in a criminal or civil action, the record will be maintained until it is no longer reasonable to believe it will be used as evidence in a criminal or civil action.
5. Whenever otherwise directed by the LPR Administrator.