

LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION SYSTEM

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide personnel with guidelines on the proper use of license plate recognition (LPR) systems.

Policy

The license plate recognition (LPR) system consists of a series of cameras designed to capture images of motor vehicle license plates. The availability and use of LPR systems have provided many opportunities for the enhancement of productivity, effectiveness, and officer safety. It is the policy of the Bellevue Police Department that all users abide by the guidelines set forth herein when using LPR systems.

Definitions

FOUO: For Official Use Only

LPR: License Plate Recognition/License Plate Reader regardless of whether it is “fixed” or “mobile” system.

OCR: Optical Character Recognition

READ: Digital images of license plates and vehicles and associated metadata (e.g., date, time, and geographic coordinates associated with the vehicle image capture) that are captured by the LPR system.

ALERT: A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the LPR system receives a potential “hit” on a license plate and as further defined in Neb. Rev. Stat. 60-3202 as may be amended.

HIT: A read matched to a plate that has previously been registered on an agency’s “hot list” of vehicle plates related to stolen vehicles, wanted vehicles, or other factors supporting investigation, or which has been manually registered by a user for further investigation.

HOT LIST: License plate numbers of stolen cars, vehicles owned by persons of interest, and vehicles associated with AMBER Alerts that are regularly added to “hot lists” circulated among law enforcement agencies. Hot list information can come from a variety of sources, including stolen vehicle information from the National Insurance Crime Bureau and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), as well as national AMBER Alerts and Department of Homeland Security watch lists. Departments of motor vehicles can provide lists of expired registration tags, and law enforcement agencies can interface their own, locally compiled hot lists to the LPR system. These lists serve an officer safety function as well as an investigatory purpose. In addition to agency supported hot lists, users may also manually add license plate numbers to hot lists in order to be alerted if and when a vehicle license plate of interest is “read” by the LPR system.

FIXED LPR SYSTEM: LPR cameras that are permanently affixed to a structure, such as a pole, a traffic barrier, or a bridge.

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.

MOBILE APPLICATIONS: LPR system designed to be used on a mobile data device that utilizes smart phone technology.

PORTABLE LPR SYSTEM: LPR cameras that are transportable and can be moved and deployed in a variety of venues as needed, such as a traffic barrel or speed radar sign.

ADMINISTRATOR: The Support Division Captain shall be designated as the Administrator for purposes of this policy.

AUTOMATIC LICESNE PLATE READER SYSTEM: One or more mobile or fixed automated high-speed cameras used in combination with computer algorithms to convert images of license plates into computer-readable data.

Procedures

- The use of LPR systems is restricted to public safety–related missions of the Bellevue Police Department.
- LPR systems and associated equipment and data bases are authorized for official public safety purposes. Misuse of this equipment and associated databases, or data, may be subject to disciplinary actions. Captured plate data shall not be used or released in violation of the Nebraska License Plate Reader Act.
- LPR systems, data and associated media are the property of the Bellevue Police Department and intended for use in conducting official business with limited exceptions noted elsewhere in this policy and State Statute.

Administration

The Support Division Captain is responsible for the administrative oversight of LPR system operations including the following:

- Establishing protocols for access and retention of LPR data and associated media files
- 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
- Establishing protocols to ensure the security and integrity of data captured, stored, and/or retained by the LPR system
- Ensuring the proper training of the personnel approved to operate the LPR system.
- Maintaining records identifying approved LPR deployments and documenting their results, including appropriate documentation of significant incidents and arrests that are related to LPR usage and complying with State Statute.
- Authorizing any requests for LPR systems use or data access according to the policies and guidelines of the Police Department.
- Ensuring that the most current Police Department LPR SOP is posted on the Department’s Office public web page.

- Ensure that all statutory reporting and public disclosure requirements regarding LPR system use are met. The following information, if captured by the LPR must be included in the annual Nebraska Crime Commission report:
 - * The names of each list against which captured plate data was checked, the number of confirmed matches, and the number of matches that upon further investigation did not correlate to an alert; and
 - * The number of manually-entered license plate numbers for investigative purposes, the number of confirmed matches, and the number of matches that upon further investigation did not correlate to an alert.
- Designating and training personnel who shall check equipment on a regular basis to ensure functionality and camera alignment. Any equipment that falls outside expected functionality shall be removed from service until deficiencies have been corrected.
- Ensuring that LPR systems repairs, hardware or software, shall be made by agency authorized sources.
- Monitoring License Plate Reader System Usage
- Ensuring that LPR operation and access to LPR collected data shall be for official agency purposes only.
- Ensuring that only users who have been properly trained in the use and operational protocols of the LPR systems are permitted to use it.
- Ensuring that the program system has been developed to update to the system at a minimum of once every twenty-four hours.
- Ensuring proper LPR Data Sharing and Dissemination
- Ensuring proper retention
- Ensuring LPR reads are retained for no longer than 180 days before being deleted from the system or as otherwise provided in Neb. Rev. Stat 60-3204 as may be amended. Hot list entries and reads involved in an active, ongoing criminal investigation shall be exempt.
- Ensuring compliance with the Automatic License Plate Reader Privacy Act as may be amended.

Use of Systems

- Designated and trained personnel shall check equipment on a regular basis to ensure functionality and camera alignment. Any equipment that falls outside expected functionality shall be removed from service until deficiencies have been corrected.
- LPR operation and access to LPR collected data shall be for official agency purposes only
- Only users who have been properly trained in the use and operational protocols of the LPR systems are permitted to use it.
- Use of mobile applications for automatic license plate reader technology on devices not owned by the Bellevue Police Department is strictly prohibited.
- Automatic license plate reader system(s) may be used when such use is by a law enforcement agency of a governmental entity for the purpose of identifying:
 - Outstanding parking or traffic violations;
 - An unregistered or uninsured vehicle;
 - A vehicle in violation of the vehicle equipment requirements set forth under the Nebraska Rules of the Road;
 - A vehicle in violation of any other vehicle registration requirement;
 - A vehicle registered to an individual for whom there is an outstanding warrant;

- A vehicle associated with a missing person;
 - A vehicle that has been reported stolen; or
 - A vehicle that is relevant and material to an ongoing criminal investigation.
- LPR Alerts/Hits: Prior to initiation of the stop:
 - * The user 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.
 - * The user shall verify the current status of the plate through dispatch or MDC query when circumstances allow.
 - In each case in which an alert or a hit is triggered, the user shall record the disposition of the alert and the hit into the LPR system
 - *Hot lists may be updated manually if the user enters a specific plate into the LPR system and wants to be alerted when that plate is located. Whenever a plate is manually entered into the LPR system, the user shall document the reason and case number which is applicable.
 - * Special Details: LPR use during nontraditional deployments (e.g., special operations or during a criminal investigation) must be approved by the Administrator.
 - * Searches of historical data within the LPR system shall be done in accordance with established departmental policies and procedures.
 - LPR data should be considered FOUO and can be shared for legitimate law enforcement purposes or a valid Court Order.