



COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION (ALPR) AND FIXED CAMERA SITES

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Accreditation Standard:

460 POLICY

The Columbia Police Department utilizes Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) technology to digitally capture license plate data, video, and still images of vehicles while recognizing the established privacy rights of the public. The procedures associated with this policy govern all department members utilizing ALPR technology, including procedures to follow when using, accessing, and retaining data obtained from the system. All data and images gathered are for the official use of this department. As such data may contain confidential information, it is not open to public review.

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460.1 DEFINITIONS

ALPR (Automated License Plate Recognition) – Technology that uses cameras to capture license plate data, video, and still images of vehicles.

Hot List – A database populated with items of specific concern to the investigative interests of law enforcement. This may include, but is not limited to, stolen/wanted vehicles and license plates, wanted and missing persons, cautions, and license plates associated with AMBER alerts or various watch lists provided for law enforcement purposes.

Fixed Camera Site – Refers to a fixed or semi-fixed location where cameras equipped with ALPR technology are installed, e.g. Flock Safety cameras.

460.2 ALPR - GENERAL

ALPR technology allows for the automated detection of license plates. The Columbia Police Department uses in-car and fixed camera site ALPR technology to process vehicle license plate data for official law enforcement purposes, such as identifying stolen or wanted vehicles, stolen license plates, and missing or endangered persons.

These ALPR systems capture data that are exposed to public view, or where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy in accordance with the law. Examples of public view include, but are not limited to:

1. License plates and vehicles traveling on a public roadway;
2. License plates and vehicles that are on private property, but visible from a public roadway; or
3. License plates and vehicles traveling in a public parking area or business establishment to which the public has access.

It may also be used to gather information related to investigatory leads, active warrants, suspect interdiction, crime analysis, and stolen property recovery. ALPR equipment is complimented by real time digital video and still images to enhance the data collected to increase the effectiveness of generated leads.

In order to ensure investigative leads are exhausted, officers should check the ALPR system for any previous leads where full or partial license plates are known. This information can be valuable in regard to locating a vehicle that is either stolen or utilized in a crime.

460.3 ALPR ADMINISTRATION

The Investigations Assistant Chief shall oversee the installation, maintenance, data retention, and access of ALPR equipment. The Investigations Assistant Chief will designate personnel within the division to manage the daily operations of ALPR equipment and data. Additionally, the Investigations Assistant Chief will have overall responsibility for administering the Flock and Axon systems. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

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1. In coordination with TRU, ensure training requirements for all authorized users (See Training Policy).
2. In coordination with the Professional Standards Bureau, conduct quarterly audits of the Flock and Axon systems to ensure information security and compliance with this policy and procedure.
3. In consultation with the Evidence Supervisor, who is responsible for ensuring that all ALPR data is purged from the server once it is no longer needed as evidence in a criminal or civil case, or in response to discovery requests or other lawful requests.

Flock Safety is responsible for storing data, ensuring its proper maintenance, and security. The vendor purges this data after thirty (30) days of storage. The Department may independently retain data longer than thirty (30) days if needed for investigative purposes or if said data has evidentiary value.

Data on the Axon system is owned by the Department. The Department purges this data after thirty (30) days of storage but may retain data longer if needed for investigative purposes or if said data has evidentiary value.

460.3.1 TRANSPARENCY PORTAL

The Columbia Police Department maintains a public-facing Transparency Portal that provides information about the locations of fixed-site cameras operated by the Department. This portal specifies the beats and wards where ALPR camera sites are located. The Transparency Portal is accessible through the Columbia Police Department's official website. The Investigations Assistant Chief, or designee, shall be responsible for ensuring the portal is maintained with current and accurate information.

460.3.2 DATA AVAILABILITY FOR LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

Data requested for legal proceedings will be available through proper discovery, subpoena processes, and the Sunshine request process as permitted by law. Requests for ALPR data must follow established procedures for legal documentation requests as outlined in city policies and applicable laws.

460.3.3 DATA SHARING RESTRICTIONS

Data obtained from ALPR cameras shall not be shared with third parties except through legal requests or Sunshine requests as permitted by law. Any sharing of ALPR data must be documented and must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws governing the collection, retention, and dissemination of such data.

460.4 OPERATIONS AND AUTHORIZED USE

To ensure proper use, department members must adhere to the established operational procedures and authorized usage guidelines outlined below:

1. Any member permitted to operate ALPR systems shall receive department-approved training.
2. All ALPR systems shall only be used for official law enforcement purposes.
3. Members shall only access department, state, and/or federal data for which they have been authorized.

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4. ALPR technology may be used during any routine patrol operation or criminal investigation.
5. ALPR technology may be used to canvass license plates around any crime scene.
 - A. Special consideration should be given to using ALPR-equipped vehicles to canvass areas surrounding homicides, shootings, and other major incidents.
 - B. Partial license plates reported during major crimes should be entered into the ALPR system to help identify suspect vehicles.
6. Whenever a member of the department accesses the Flock or Axon database, a corresponding case number or computer-aided dispatch (CAD) number must be associated with that access in the "Search Reason" field. Examples of descriptions include, but are not limited to: Search for suspect vehicle. Search for missing person. One-word entries in the "Search Reason" field are prohibited.
7. Upon receiving an alarm, the ALPR operator should use readily available information to verify the accuracy of the "hit." The operator must:
 - A. Visually confirm that the actual license plate number matches the one displayed on the ALPR screen.
 - B. Confirm that the "hit" remains active by checking the information through NCIC/MULES.

It's important to note that an ALPR alarm alone does not provide sufficient probable cause for a stop or arrest without further verification.
8. Relevant "Investigative Summaries" from searches of the Flock system shall be placed onto evidence.com and tagged with the term "flock."
9. Relevant data from searches of the Axon database shall be categorized appropriately (e.g. "Retain for Court", etc.) on evidence.com.
10. When data obtained from the Flock system results in an outcome such as an arrest, the recovery of stolen property, etc., the officer shall complete the "Edit outcome" field in the Flock system.

460.5 UNAUTHORIZED USE

Department members are prohibited from using, or permitting others to use, ALPR equipment or database records for any unauthorized purposes. (RSMo § 576.050 - Misuse of Official Information). The following uses of ALPR systems are specifically prohibited:

1. To harass or intimidate any individual or group;
2. To target or focus on individuals or groups solely because of their race, gender, religion, political affiliation, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or any other classification protected by law;

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3. For any personal or non-official purpose; and
4. Traffic enforcement.

460.6 HOTLIST

An officer may request that vehicle information be added to the ALPR system's Custom Hotlist for routine patrol operations and criminal investigations, but this requires approval from a Lieutenant or higher-ranking officer. The approving Lieutenant or higher-ranking officer shall be documented in the entry narrative of the ALPR system.

Hotlist data shall be refreshed at least every twenty-four (24) hours. Members who locate a vehicle on the department's Custom Hotlist are responsible for removing it from the ALPR system after it is recovered. The member shall ensure the Hotlist entry is cleared within two (2) hours.

460.7 ALPR SYSTEM AUDITING

The Professional Standards Bureau shall conduct quarterly audits of the Flock and Axon systems to verify compliance with this directive. To assist with these audits, both of these systems automatically log the account information of members accessing the system during usage. These system audits shall examine a random sample of database inquiries made during the preceding quarter.

The audit process shall verify:

1. All inquiries comply with procedural requirements specified in Section 460.3(8);
2. Each inquiry was conducted for authorized law enforcement purposes; and
3. Database access was limited to personnel who have completed mandatory departmental training

Upon completion of each quarterly audit, the Professional Standards Bureau shall submit a report of findings to the City Manager's Office.

460.8 ACCOUNTABILITY

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action. All sanctions and disciplinary measures shall be determined and administered pursuant to Policy 1020 - Complaints, Internal Investigations, and Discipline. Nothing in this policy supersedes or modifies the procedures set forth in Policy 1020.