



RICHMOND POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER



Subject: <i>AUTOMATIC LICENSE PLATE READER</i>		Chapter 8	Number 11	# Pages 8
References: CALEA Standards 41.3.9 <i>VA § 2.2-5517, 9.1-101</i> <i>City Administrative Regulation 2.8</i>	Related Orders:	Effective Date: <i>04/21/2026</i> Revised By: <i>PD-132</i> Prv. Rev. Date: <i>07/25/2024</i>		
If any provision of this General Order conflicts with any collective bargaining article, the collective bargaining agreement shall govern.				
Chief of Police: <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"></div>				

I. PURPOSE

Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology captures information on a passing vehicle from a device designed for that purpose. ALPRs are used by the Richmond Police Department across multiple systems and applications to support a range of enforcement activities. ALPR functionality is a component within traffic enforcement cameras, such as school zone speed cameras and red light cameras. RPD also employs this technology in Flock Safety devices, which are deployed throughout the city and aid investigative efforts by capturing and storing vehicle information. Flock Safety ALPRs are primarily pole-mounted along the roadside, although RPD utilizes a small number of portable, trailer-mounted devices. The Flock ALPR system is distinct from the traffic enforcement cameras that use ALPR.

The purpose of this directive is to establish the policies and procedures for the Richmond Police Department regarding the utilization of the ***Flock ALPR system and similarly deployed ALPRs***. In addition, this policy establishes guidelines to ensure compliance with regulations regarding training, management, storage, ***sharing of***, and retrieval of all ***ALPR captured data***. ***The content of this policy only applies to ALPR systems utilized for investigative purposes, and therefore, shall not apply to ALPR-integrated speed or red light cameras.***

[CALEA 41.3.9a]

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGE

This policy has been updated to reflect revisions in legislation that prompt stricter controls, enhanced transparency, and limited discretionary usage of ALPRs. All revisions are in bold and italicized text.

III. POLICY

It is the policy of the Richmond Police Department that officers shall *utilize* the *ALPR* when such use is appropriate to the proper performance of *their* official duties, where the data captured is consistent with this policy, statutory and constitutional limitations, privacy concerns, and ethical standards. Identifying vehicles having specific law enforcement interest is crucial to public safety. *ALPR technology* is intended to provide law enforcement personnel with an automated method of identifying license plate(s) and vehicles pursuant to a criminal investigation or other valid law enforcement purpose.

IV. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this General Order. Responsibility rests with the Division Commander to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated.

This directive is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

V. DEFINITIONS

- A. **ALERT** – A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the *ALPR system* receives a potential “hit” on a license plate.
- B. **ALPR COORDINATOR** – *A supervisor within the CCIC responsible for managing, maintaining, and auditing the Department's ALPR program.*
- C. **AUDIT TRAIL** – *All records of queries and responses in an automatic license plate recognition system, and all records of actions in which system data is accessed, entered, updated, shared, or disseminated, including the (i) date and time of access; (ii) license plate number or other data elements used to query the system; (iii) specific purpose, as set forth in subsection D, for accessing or querying the system, including the offense type for any criminal investigation; (iv) associated call for service or case number; and (v) username of the person or persons who accessed or queried the system.*
- D. **AUDIT TRAIL DATA** – *All forms of data collected or generated by an automatic license plate recognition system for purposes of producing an audit trail.*
- E. **AUTOMATIC LICENSE PLATE READER/LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION** – Technology that captures information from a vehicle traveling on a roadway at a specific time and location by taking a still photo noting the license plate and other vehicle characteristics such as vehicle make, color and distinct features.

- The still photo of a passing vehicle captured by ALPR devices and the information derived from it – e.g. vehicle color, vehicle type, make, distinctive characteristics such as stickers, roof rack, date/time, location – are stored in a secure database maintained by vendor Flock Safety for access by authorized RPD personnel. RPD may also grant access to the data from RPD devices to other Virginia law enforcement agencies. Other Virginia law enforcement agencies may similarly grant access to data from their devices to RPD.*
- F. CAPITAL CITY INTELLIGENCE CENTER (CCIC) SUPERVISOR** – Professional staff employee who oversees the Capital City Intelligence Center and is responsible for all ALPR systems used by the Department.
 - G. FLOCK ALPRs** – Specialized, solar-powered, and cellular-connected license plate recognition cameras designed to capture reads of vehicle plates and characteristics (i.e. make, color, type) for “hot list” alerts and temporary storage for investigative purposes. The Richmond Police Department utilizes both fixed and portable Flock ALPRs.
 - H. HIT** – A read matched to a plate that has previously been registered on an agency’s “hotlist” of vehicle plates related to stolen and / or wanted vehicles or other factors supporting investigation.
 - I. HOTLIST** – License plate numbers of vehicles of interest to law enforcement related to criminal investigations, e.g. stolen cars, missing persons and/or wanted parties.
 - J. LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY** – Any agency or entity that employs law enforcement officers as defined in Virginia Code § 9.1-101.
 - K. MOBILE DATE COMPUTER (MDC)** – Mobile Data Computer is a computerized device in public transit vehicles utilized to communicate with a central dispatch office/terminal.
 - L. OFFICER** – A certified Law Enforcement Officer who is a sworn employee of the Richmond Police Department.
 - M. 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 **ALPR** device.
 - N. SYSTEM DATA** – All forms of data collected or generated by an automatic license plate recognition system, including images of license plates, vehicles, any identifying characteristics of vehicles, the date, time, and location of an image, and any peripheral images collected from which analytical data may be extracted.

VI. PROCEDURE

A. Operation:

[CALEA 41.3.9a]

The Richmond Police Department has adopted the use of *ALPR systems* to enhance *public safety by aiding* law enforcement *in criminal* and missing/*endangered* persons investigations.

1. *ALPR users shall create, revise, and protect ALPR user passwords in accordance with City of Richmond Administrative Regulation 2.8, Electronic Systems – User Passwords. Employees shall not share passwords. If an employee suspects their password, or another employee’s password, has been compromised, they are required to report this suspicion to the DIT Help Desk and immediate supervisor.*
2. *Pursuant to VA Code § 2.2-5517, ALPR users may only use the system for valid law enforcement reasons – criminal investigations and missing/endangered persons. ALPR users shall enter the required information for all Flock ALPR queries, including a valid offense type, valid case number and the reason for the query.*

NOTE: The case number must be an actual incident number associated with a Richmond Police investigation or other investigation initiated and led by a law enforcement agency within Virginia. Employees shall not use “N/A”, “YYYYMMDD-0000”, or some variation of a CAD number with fabricated digits at the end of number (such as the employee’s Code Number). In addition, the case number shall not be left blank.

3. *If an officer needs to conduct a search of the ALPR system pursuant to an investigation that has not yet been assigned a CAD number, they must contact the Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response (DECPR) and DECPR shall create a number for their investigation. If a report already exists (i.e. wanted person, robbery suspect, etc.), the officer shall identify the original CAD number and input it in the search parameters.*
4. *If an officer wants to query a license plate based off of a “Be On The Lookout” (BOLO) broadcast or warrant from another jurisdiction, the officer shall contact CCIC to run the license plate query. If it is an emergency and CCIC is not operational and therefore unavailable to run the plate from an out-of-jurisdiction BOLO, the officer must complete the search parameters as completely as possible and maintain documentation of the reason for the query for auditing purposes.*
5. *Upon receiving a notification or positive hit from the ALPR system, the employee shall verify the accuracy of the information prior to any enforcement action being taken.*

- a) An **ALPR hit** alone is not sufficient to warrant a stop or arrest. The officer will need to verify stolen or wanted information through appropriate **DECPR** channels or **MDC query** prior to any enforcement action being taken. *Alternatively, there must be independent reasonable suspicion for the stop.*

NOTE: Officers will notate that a vehicle stop was based upon a verified ALPR hit when inputting data required to be collected by the Community Policing Act, pursuant to Virginia Code § 52-30.2.

6. *Any authorized Flock ALPR user can create a Custom Hotlist, which shall contain at a minimum: a valid CAD/incident number, legally permissible reason for entry, and vehicle description (year, make, model, and color).*

NOTE: When creating or updating the hotlist, hotlist entries shall be set to expire in 21 days. Hotlist entries shall not be set to “never expire.”

B. Responsibilities of the ALPR Coordinator:

1. Authorizing any request for **ALPR system** use or data access according to the policies and guidelines of this agency;
2. *Verifying that any employee who requests access to the ALPR system has a completed ALPR User Agreement;*
3. *Ensuring that the data from RPD ALPR devices is purged after 21 days and that the data sharing is limited to Virginia law enforcement agencies.*
4. *Verifying that any employee who requests access to the ALPR system has completed training.*
5. *Auditing system use.*
6. *Submitting an annual report to the Virginia State Police Data Analysis and Reporting Team (VSP DART).*

[CALEA 41.3.9b]

C. Operator Training:

[CALEA 41.3.9c]

1. Prior to using an **ALPR system** for law enforcement purposes, **all users** shall complete a Department-approved **ALPR training** course.
2. *The Department shall maintain a record of each employee’s completion of ALPR training in the employee’s training record.*

[CALEA 41.3.9c]

D. Data Storage and Retention:

[CALEA 41.3.9d]

1. The Department may use the *ALPRs* to compare active reads to *an* existing hotlist, such as stolen vehicles or Amber Alerts.
2. *ALPR system data shall be purged after 21 days consistent with Virginia Code § 2.2-5517, unless needed for an active criminal investigation or prosecution.*
3. *ALPR data is exempt from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.*
4. The Department may collect, store, and analyze data that relates to a specific, ongoing, *criminal* investigation *past 21 days*. That data shall be made part of the criminal investigative file and may not be used for other purposes.
5. The *ALPR system data and audit trail data* are subject to a litigation hold.
 - a. A litigation hold is a notice that litigation is pending or *is* anticipated and *directs* that member to preserve all relevant documents and to stop the routine document retention policies for such documentation.
 - b. The *ALPR* Coordinator shall ensure all *ALPR* images and data covered by a litigation hold *and ALPR* images and data that they independently know or should reasonably know may be relevant to future litigation are retained until notified that the subject litigation has concluded and the items may be released.

E. *Sharing of ALPR Data:*

Virginia Code § 2.2-5517(F) restricts sharing ALPR data. Specifically, the Code states, in part:

A law enforcement agency may share system data or audit trail data for the following purposes:

1. *With another Virginia law enforcement agency for purposes set forth in Virginia Code § 2.2-5517(D), which may include:*
 - a. *Allowing another law enforcement agency to query system data, provided that the agency receiving such data shall comply with all of the provisions of this section;*
2. *With the attorney for the Commonwealth for purposes set forth in Virginia Code § 2.2-5517(D) or for complying with discovery or a court order in a criminal proceeding;*
3. *With a defendant or their counsel for purposes of complying with discovery or a court order in a criminal proceeding;*
4. *Pursuant to a court order or a court-issued subpoena duces tecum in any criminal or civil proceeding;*

5. *With the vendor for maintenance or quality assurance purposes; or*
6. *To alert the public to an emergency situation, a missing or endangered person, a person associated with human trafficking, or a person with an outstanding warrant.*

F. *ALPR Installation and Maintenance:*

1. *Flock Safety is responsible for the installation and maintenance of all ALPR devices leased by the City of Richmond. The ALPR Coordinator shall be contacted when officers notice that an ALPR is in need of repair. The Department shall determine the location/relocation of fixed ALPR devices.*

G. *Auditing:*

1. *The ALPR Coordinator shall ensure that mandatory purges of ALPR data are conducted after 21 days.*
2. *The ALPR Coordinator shall conduct mandatory internal audits every 30 days to ensure compliance with use and query requirements.*
3. *ALPR users who are found to be non-compliant in an audit will be contacted to submit a PD-118, Complainant/Officer Statement, with notification to their supervisor, for the first offense. A pattern of non-compliance may result in loss of access and/or disciplinary action.*
4. *Any misuse of the ALPR system, in violation of VA Code § 2.2-5517, will be evaluated as a possible criminal violation and be referred to the Internal Affairs Division (IAD) for investigation.*

H. *Transparency and Reporting:*

1. *Annually, the Crime Analysis Supervisor and ALPR Coordinator shall provide ALPR data, including demographics of suspects and stopped drivers, query counts, and unauthorized access incidents to the Department's Planning Division for inclusion in the Department's annual report.*
2. *The Office of Legal Affairs shall provide information on subpoenas and warrants seeking ALPR data to the Department's Planning Division for inclusion in the Department's annual report.*

NOTE: Data from the Crime Analysis Supervisor, ALPR Coordinator, and Office of Legal Affairs shall be submitted to the Department's Planning Division no later than February 1st each year, for the prior year's data.

3. *The Department's Planning Division will publicly post the Department's annual report, to include ALPR data.*

4. *Annually, the Office of Legal Affairs, Crime Analysis Supervisor, and ALPR coordinator shall provide ALPR data, including demographics of suspects and stopped drivers, query counts, unauthorized access incidents, and subpoena/warrant request information to the Virginia State Police no later than April 1st, for the prior year's data.*

I. Penalties and Evidence Rules:

Pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-5517(N), unauthorized use, sharing, or dissemination of ALPR data is a criminal offense, and a conviction of such an offense is punishable as a Class 1 misdemeanor.

VII. FORMS

- A. *ALPR User Agreement Form*
- B. *PD-118, Complainant/Officer Statement*