

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)

428.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

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

428.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Official law enforcement purpose - The investigation, detection or analysis of a crime; of a violation of the Maryland vehicle laws; of a terrorist operation; or of missing or endangered person searches or alerts (Md. Code PS § 3-509).

428.2 POLICY

The policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is to utilize ALPR technology to capture and store digital license plate data and images while recognizing the established privacy rights of the public.

All data and images gathered by the ALPR are for the official use of this office. Because such data may contain confidential information, it is not open to public review.

428.3 ADMINISTRATION

The ALPR technology, also known as License Plate Recognition (LPR), allows for the automated detection of license plates. It is used by the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office to convert data associated with vehicle license plates for official law enforcement purposes, including identifying stolen or wanted vehicles, stolen license plates and missing persons. It may also be used to gather information related to active warrants, homeland security, electronic surveillance, suspect interdiction and stolen property recovery.

ALPR data retention and access shall be managed by the Special Operations Commander or designee. All installation and maintenance of ALPR equipment shall be managed by the Fleet and Radio Communications Coordinator overseen by the Administrative Division Commander.

428.4 OPERATIONS

Use of an ALPR is restricted to the purposes outlined below. Office 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

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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.

- (d) No member of this office shall operate ALPR equipment or access ALPR data without first completing office-approved training.
- (e) No ALPR operator may access confidential office, state or federal data unless authorized to do so.
- (f) If practicable, the deputy should verify an ALPR response through the appropriate official law enforcement database before taking enforcement action that is based solely on an ALPR alert.

For procedures related to Operations, see the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Guidelines For Use](#)

428.5 DATA COLLECTION AND RETENTION

The Special Operations Commander 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 Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center in accordance with office procedures.

428.6 ACCOUNTABILITY

All data will be closely safeguarded and protected by both procedural and technological means. The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office will observe the following safeguards regarding access to and use of stored data (Md. Code PS § 3-509):

- (a) All ALPR data downloaded to the mobile workstation and in storage shall be accessible only through a login/password-protected system capable of documenting all access of information by name, date and time.
- (b) Members approved to access ALPR data under these guidelines are permitted to access the data for legitimate law enforcement purposes only, such as when the data relate to a specific criminal investigation or office-related civil or administrative action.
- (c) ALPR system audits should be conducted on a regular basis.
 - (a) This shall include audits of requests made by individual law enforcement agencies and those made by individual law enforcement officers.

For procedures related to System Security, see the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [System Security](#)

428.7 RELEASING ALPR DATA

Requests for ALPR data should be directed to the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center. Information gathered by the ALPR 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

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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 Special Operations Commander or the authorized designee and approved before the request is fulfilled.
- (c) The approved request is retained on file.
- (d) Requests should be submitted to Mdwatch@mcac.maryland.gov or a request form can be faxed to 410-281-2495.