



HABERSHAM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

General Order Number 4.17

LICENSE PLATE READERS



Issue Date: January 2, 2012 Revised Date: February 17, 2026

PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish policies and procedures governing the deployment, operation, and management of License Plate Reader (LPR) systems by members of the Habersham County Sheriff's Office.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Habersham County Sheriff's Office that License Plate Reader systems be used strictly for legitimate law enforcement purposes and in compliance with applicable State of Georgia statutes, including O.C.G.A. § 35-1-22 and the Georgia Open Records Act.

The use of LPR technology shall be conducted in a manner that protects public safety, respects constitutional rights, and safeguards the integrity of criminal investigations.

DISCUSSION

License Plate Reader systems enhance investigative capability and assist in locating stolen vehicles and wanted persons while promoting deputy and public safety and welfare. More specifically, LPR systems may be utilized for:

- A) Be On Look Out (BOLO)
- B) Attempt to Locate
- C) Child Abduction
- D) AMBER Alerts
- E) Missing Persons

The use of such technology inherently involves the collection of vehicle location data. Deputies shall ensure that LPR systems are used responsibly, lawfully, and only in furtherance of official duties.

LPR systems are investigative tools. An LPR "hit" does not, standing alone, establish probable cause.

DEFINITIONS

License Plate Reader (LPR) – An electronic system that captures digital images of license plates and converts those images into searchable data, including associated metadata such as date, time, and location.

Read – The capture of a license plate image and associated metadata by an LPR system.

Hit – A notification generated when a captured plate matches a recognized law enforcement database entry or authorized agency alert.

Hot List – A database of license plates associated with stolen vehicles, wanted persons, missing persons, AMBER Alerts, suspended registrations, insurance violations, or other lawful law enforcement entries derived from NCIC, GCIC, or other authorized sources.

LPR Administrator – The Patrol Commander or designee responsible for oversight of LPR systems.

AUTHORIZED USE

LPR systems shall be used only for official law enforcement purposes.

LPR systems shall not be used:

- A) For personal reasons;
- B) For political or non-law-enforcement activities;
- C) To monitor individuals or groups based solely upon race, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, or other constitutionally protected characteristics;
- D) For general surveillance absent a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

Only trained and authorized personnel shall operate or access LPR systems or associated data.

LPR OPERATION

All LPR operations shall be conducted in compliance with constitutional standards and applicable Georgia law.

At the beginning of each shift, deputies assigned LPR-equipped vehicles shall:

- A) Verify system functionality
- B) Confirm current hot list updates

LPR users shall not use glass cleaner on the lenses of the LPR system or use an automatic car wash while the LPR system is attached to the patrol vehicle.

Equipment deficiencies shall be reported immediately to the LPR Administrator or designee.

LPR HITS AND TRAFFIC STOPS

An LPR alert shall not be the sole basis for enforcement action.

Prior to initiating a traffic stop based upon an LPR hit, the deputy shall:

A) Visually verify that the license plate number, including alphanumeric characters and state of issuance, matches the LPR read

B) Confirm the status of the plate through GCIC/NCIC via Communications or MDT

C) Evaluate whether reasonable suspicion or probable cause exists under the totality of the circumstances

All enforcement actions shall comply with constitutional standards.

MANUAL HOT LIST ENTRIES

License plates may be manually entered into the LPR system only for legitimate law enforcement purposes.

Manual entries shall:

A) Be supported by a valid case number

B) Identify the investigating deputy

C) Include contact information

D) State the reason for entry

A report shall be generated documenting the entry.

Manual entries shall not exceed thirty-one (31) days unless extended for documented investigative necessity.

The LPR Administrator shall review entries for compliance.

DATA ACCESS AND SECURITY

Access to LPR data shall be restricted to authorized personnel.

All queries and system access shall be logged and subject to administrative review.

LPR data shall not be accessed without a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

DATA RETENTION AND DISCLOSURE

LPR data stored on HCSO systems shall be retained for a period not to exceed thirty-one (31) days unless:

A) The data is associated with an active criminal investigation

B) The data has evidentiary value

C) A lawful preservation request has been received

Absent qualifying criteria, data shall be purged after the retention period.

Captured LPR data collected by a law enforcement agency is exempt from public disclosure pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-18-72(a)(35), except as otherwise required by law.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Patrol Commander shall serve as LPR Administrator and shall:

- A) Oversee system deployment and compliance
- B) Maintain user authorization records
- C) Conduct periodic audits of LPR access and usage
- D) Ensure compliance with Georgia law and this General Order

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Any violation of this policy shall be subject to progressive disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, depending upon the nature, severity, and circumstances of the violation.

Nothing in this section shall preclude immediate disciplinary action when circumstances warrant.

This policy supersedes any previous policy



By order of Sheriff Robin Krockum