



HALL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

S.O.P. 12-6: Automatic License Plate Recognition System

Effective Date: 12/20/2023

Revised Date: 8/3/2026

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the operation, training, maintenance, auditing, accountability, and authorized use of the Hall County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) systems and associated data. This policy applies to all members/employees of the Hall County Sheriff's Office.

II. POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Hall County Sheriff's Office to utilize Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) systems, whether fixed or mobile, to scan license plates to detect and identify plates associated with individuals or vehicles who are missing, wanted, or otherwise suspected in criminal activity.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 35-1-22(e), sworn employees assigned to utilize ALPR systems shall receive necessary training before being authorized to deploy or access an ALPR system. All ALPR devices authorized by the HCSO shall be used and maintained in accordance with manufacturer recommendations, applicable law, CJIS Security Policy, and this policy.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR): A complete system, fixed or mobile, by which advanced optical character recognition (OCR) camera technology and software captures images of a vehicle's license plates and instantaneously compares them with a large file of records (hot lists) to identify vehicles of interest. An ALPR system merely accomplishes, more efficiently, the same task that a deputy may accomplish by reading a license plate and manually entering the number into a database for comparison.
- B. Data Query Logs: Records documenting searches or queries of ALPR data, including the user, date, time, and purpose of the search.
- C. Hardware: Automatic License Plate Recognition systems include cameras that capture images of license plates. These cameras may be affixed to patrol vehicles or installed at fixed locations based on operational needs or crime analysis.
- D. Hit: A positive indication, by visible and/or audible signal, of a potential match between data on the "hot list" file and a license plate scanned by an ALPR system. A hit is not conclusive confirmation that a license plate is wanted, and additional investigation is always warranted when a hit is indicated.
- E. Hot List: A list of stolen plates and vehicle entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database and/or the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) database, as well as any information that is entered manually by an operating officer. This list may include, but is not limited to stolen vehicles, wanted persons, terrorists watch lists, sexual predators, local bench warrants, and missing persons.
- F. Operator: Any HCSO employee who has successfully completed agency-approved ALPR training and has been authorized to operate the ALPR system or access ALPR data.
- G. Software: Technology used to process captured license plate images and compare them to authorized Hot Lists.

IV. PROCEDURE

- A. Authority

1. The Sheriff, Chief Deputy, Bureau Major, or designee shall authorize the installation of mobile or fixed ALPR systems.
2. The Sheriff, Chief Deputy, Bureau Major, or designee shall determine the strategic placement of fixed ALPR systems within Hall County.
3. The Sheriff shall designate an ALPR Administrator responsible for oversight of ALPR deployment, operations, maintenance, security, auditing, and user administration. The agency may have multiple ALPR Administrators, one for each software platform (e.g., Flock, ELSAG, Axon).

The ALPR Administrator shall be responsible for:

- a. Selecting and maintaining an adequate number of trained and authorized operators.
 - b. Authorizing requests for ALPR use and data access.
 - c. Ensuring equipment inspections for functionality, camera alignment, and maintenance.
 - d. Designating trained users.
 - e. Managing user accounts and passwords.
 - f. Providing continuing training regarding policy, hardware, software, and legal updates.
 - g. Coordinating required audits of ALPR system usage.
4. Use of an ALPR system is restricted to the purposes outlined herein:
 - a. ALPR systems shall only be used for official law enforcement purposes.
 - b. Historical ALPR database searches require reasonable suspicion, probable cause, or another authorized law enforcement purpose and shall include a documented offense type, case number, incident number, CAD event number, or other approved identifier.
 - c. Emergency uses involving active crimes, missing persons, Mattie's Calls, AMBER Alerts, or other exigent circumstances are authorized.
 - d. No employee shall operate ALPR equipment or access ALPR data without completing agency-approved training.
 - e. Operators shall verify every ALPR alert through GCIC/NCIC prior to taking enforcement action.
 - f. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 35-1-22(d)(1), any employee who knowingly requests, obtains, or uses captured license plate data under false pretenses or for any purpose other than an official law enforcement purpose commits a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature.

B. Training

The Training Unit shall oversee ALPR training.

Training shall include:

1. Manufacturer's recommendations;
2. Maintenance procedures;
3. Proper use guidelines;
4. NCIC/GCIC regulations;
5. Legal issues involved with the use of ALPR;
6. Applicable agency policy; and
7. Agency auditing requirements, documentation requirements, user accountability, authorized database searches, and criminal and administrative penalties for misuse.

C. Operation

1. ALPR systems passively read license plates of moving and parked vehicles and compare those plates against authorized Hot Lists.

Hot Lists shall be updated at the beginning of each operator's tour of duty or automatically by the system when available.

2. Upon receiving an ALPR alert:

- a. The operator shall visually compare the ALPR image to the Hot List information.
- b. If confirmed, the operator shall verify the information through NCIC/GCIC using the MDT or Hall County Central Communications before taking enforcement action.
- c. The operator shall visually verify the license plate displayed by the ALPR matches the actual plate affixed to the vehicle.

Note: An ALPR alert alone shall not constitute probable cause for arrest.

ALPR "hits" are indicated by an audible and visual alarm. The operator shall first visually verify that the list entry matches the digital image displayed by the ALPR. If the information does not match, the "hit" will be rejected. However, if the information does match, the "hits" will be accepted and shall be confirmed through NCIC/GCIC via in car Mobile Data Terminal (MCT) or Hall County Central Communications before any enforcement action is taken. Only information from NCIC/GCIC can be used for making an arrest or taking a traffic enforcement action.

3. While awaiting confirmation, an operator may conduct an investigative stop when reasonable articulable suspicion exists.
4. When enforcement action is taken as a result of an ALPR hit, a notation should be made on the Uniform Traffic Citation or in the narrative of the incident/arrest report.
5. Authorized personnel may manually add license plates to the Hot List for legitimate law enforcement purposes, including:
 - a. BOLOs
 - b. Attempt to Locate
 - c. Missing Persons
 - d. AMBER Alerts
 - e. Mattie's Calls
 - f. Wanted Persons
 - g. Wanted Vehicles
6. Every historical ALPR database search shall be associated with a documented law enforcement purpose. Users shall document the applicable case number, incident number, CAD event number, or other authorized identifier sufficient to demonstrate compliance with this policy.
7. ALPR systems may generate emails, text messages and user account alerts for hits. Deputies must view the picture of the tag produced by the ALPR to verify accuracy, then run the vehicle tag via MCT/GCIC to confirm the entry is still valid. Deputies responding to investigate the hit should advise the dispatcher of the call type they are responding to and the location.

Supervisors shall manage and coordinate the appropriate number of resources responding to the alert. If contact is made with individuals due to an ALPR alert, the deputy(s) should follow established policy/procedures related to the type of incident they are handling.

When responding to alerts for Sex Offender, Gang/Terrorist or Violent Person, deputies must have independent reasonable articulable suspicion or probable cause to make contact. When responding to Sex Offender, Wanted Persons, Gang/Terrorist, Violent Person, Missing Person Alerts; deputies should keep in mind the person linked to the alert/vehicle may not be the occupants of the vehicle at the time of the encounter. These encounters must be handled respectfully and professionally.

BEFORE making contact with a Sex Offender, (if the Sex Offender resides in Hall County) deputies should check the Sex Offenders name and DOB through GCIC via their MCT or Hall County Central Communication to determine the offense date. Once the offense date is determined, the deputy should review **SOP 17-15 Sex Offender Registry Section III** which outlines proximity restrictions for Sex Offenders based on offense date.

If RAS or PC exists and the Sex Offender is in violation of the offender's proximity restrictions, deputies must complete an Incident Report titled "Investigation/General," leave the report "Active" with a "NOTR" status, and the report should be forwarded to the Sex Offender Registry and Tracking (SORT) Unit. If the offender is in violation of proximity restrictions, and no other arrestable offenses have occurred, the Sex Offender must leave the area immediately.

If the Sex Offender resides outside of Hall County, all attempts to contact the Sex Offender's probation officer should be made to obtain the offenders probation restrictions. (The assigned probation officer is listed on the GCIC return.) If the deputy is unable to contact the probation officer and/or the Sex Offender is in violation of the proximity restrictions, deputies must complete an Incident Report titled "Probation Violation," leave the report "Investigation/General" with a "NOTR" status, and the report should be forwarded to the SORT Unit. If the offender is in violation of proximity restrictions, and no other arrestable offenses have occurred, the Sex Offender must leave the area immediately.

When responding to HCSO custom "Hot List" alerts, typically this is info/intel developed by CI or Criminal Intelligence and intended to be Intel only. Independent RAS/probable cause is needed to make contact.

Due to the potential for large numbers of pedestrians and children in the parks and other congested areas, supervisors must manage the tactics, take-down locations, and timing of encounters with stolen vehicles, stolen plates, and wanted persons to minimize danger and potential for fleeing. Well planned "box-in" tactics should be considered, following all HCSO policy/procedures.

D. Maintenance

1. Mobile operators shall inspect ALPR equipment before each shift.
2. Equipment malfunctions shall immediately be reported to the supervisor.
3. Repairs or adjustments shall only be made by authorized technicians.
4. Fixed ALPR systems shall be maintained through the authorized vendor.

E. Data Security and Access

1. ALPR data is managed and maintained by each respective vendor as set forth by federal and state law, and each vendor's internal policies. Access to the data collected is limited to members of the department that are granted an account by the agency's ALPR Administrator.
2. All ALPR data accessed through each software platform shall be protected through unique user credentials capable of documenting the user, date, time, and activity performed.

Audit logs shall be protected from unauthorized modification or deletion and retained in accordance with applicable records retention schedules.

3. Employees authorized to access historical ALPR data shall do so only for legitimate law enforcement purposes.

Every query shall contain:

- a. a case number;
- b. incident number;
- c. CAD event number;
- d. offense type; or

- e. other authorized identifier, and
- f. sufficient documentation demonstrating the law enforcement purpose.

F. ALPR Audits

The HCSO shall conduct periodic audits to ensure compliance with this policy, applicable state law, and CJIS Security Policy.

1. The ALPR Administrator, in coordination with Internal Affairs or another employee designated by the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, or Bureau Major, is responsible for conducting documented audits at least monthly.

Audits shall include review of:

- a. user login activity;
 - b. access logs;
 - c. randomly selected database queries;
 - d. documented case numbers;
 - e. manual Hot List entries;
 - f. user permissions;
 - g. retention compliance;
 - h. dissemination of ALPR information;
 - i. unauthorized access attempts; and
 - j. system security issues.
2. Vendor reports, RMS reports, and audit logs may be utilized.
 3. Audit reports shall include:
 - a. audit period;
 - b. users reviewed;
 - c. number of queries reviewed;
 - d. findings;
 - e. policy violations;
 - f. corrective action;
 - g. recommendations; and
 - h. required follow-up.
 4. Suspected misuse shall immediately be reported to the employee's supervisor and Internal Affairs.
 5. System access may be suspended pending investigation.
 6. Audit reports shall be retained in accordance with applicable records retention schedules and made available to authorized oversight entities when required by law.
 7. Misuse of ALPR technology may result in suspension or revocation of system access, disciplinary action, criminal prosecution, or both.

G. INFORMATION RELEASE

1. Members shall not discuss ALPR capabilities with the media without authorization from the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, Bureau Major, or designee.

2. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 35-1-22(f), captured ALPR data is not subject to public disclosure except as authorized by law.
3. ALPR information may only be shared with law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies for official law enforcement purposes.
4. The employee releasing information shall document:
 - a. requesting agency;
 - b. requesting employee;
 - c. purpose of request; and
 - d. associated case or incident number.
5. Mutual aid requests shall comply with existing agreements and documentation requirements.

H. Data Retention

1. The HCSO does not maintain primary storage of ALPR data. Data is maintained by the contracted vendor in accordance with applicable state law.
2. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 35-1-22(b), plate-read photographic images and Hot List hit records shall not be retained longer than 30 months unless identified as evidence in a criminal prosecution.

The retention period for Flock and Axon ALPR systems utilized by HCSO is 30 days, unless otherwise authorized by the Sheriff or required by law, and shall never exceed the statutory maximum.
3. Audit logs documenting user access, database searches, administrative activity, and system administration shall be retained in accordance with applicable records retention schedules and shall remain available for compliance reviews, administrative investigations, and criminal investigations involving misuse of the ALPR system.