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|  | Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department | | SOP |
| | <i>Standard Operating Procedure</i> | | License Plate Reader |
| | Effective Date 4/29/2011 | | 1 of 6 |

I. PURPOSE


To establish guidelines for CMPD employees for the deployment, maintenance, training, data storage, and associated uses of license plate readers (LPR) used by CMPD. It is the purpose of these procedures to serve as a guide for the use of LPRs which collect and store large amounts of data (license plates, dates, times, and locations of vehicles) for future records management, analysis and dataset linking.

II. POLICY

LPR technology automates a process that, in the past, was conducted manually by officers, tag by tag, with much discretion. LPR is an information technology system with the capability for quick scanning and matching capabilities. In addition to recovering stolen vehicles, LPR data can be used to confirm a suspect's alibi or whereabouts at a particular date and time. Data may also be used for predictive purposes, i.e., to scan and record vehicular activity in high risk/crime locations and unusual patterns of traffic by one or multiple vehicles resulting in a heightened risk or concern that emerges from analyzing the data.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. License Plate Recognition (LPR) system: Equipment consisting of camera(s), computer, and computer software used to automatically recognize and interpret the characters on vehicle license plates. The LPR can scan and read over 3,000 license plates per hour. Digital images captured by the cameras are converted into data, which is processed through the LPR system. This data is then compared against a list of license plates bearing some significance to the CMPD. If the information supplied via the LPR system alerts LPR Operators to an offense or relevant intelligence on a vehicle, the vehicles may be stopped to allow further investigation. Stored data may also be analyzed at a further date for investigative purposes.
- B. LPR Manager: Command staff level employee designated by the Chief of Police or designee who is responsible for the management of the LPR program including its administration, troubleshooting, training, repairing and coordinating all aspects of the LPR system.
- C. LPR-Generated Data: All information including GPS coordinates, date and time of a license plate reading, the optical character recognition interpreted data, and any LPR-generated digital photographic image(s) of the license plate and vehicle generated entirely through the use of and by the LPR equipment.
- D. LPR Operator: A sworn employee properly trained in the use of the CMPD LPR system.
- E. Download: The transfer of hot list data from NCIC, KBCOPS, or other data sources consisting of license plates and associated data.
- F. External Hot List: A database populated with items of specific concern to the investigative and/or enforcement interests within the CMPD's jurisdiction. External hot lists originate from sources other than CMPD such as NCIC data.

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- G. Local Hot List: An addition to the LPR server database that is appended to the External Hot List. The local hot list consists of license plates of local investigative significance entered into the server hot list from sources such as KBCOPS or GangNet.
- H. Alert: A positive indication, by visual and/or audible signal, of a potential match between data on the hot list and a license plate scanned by the LPR system. An alert is not conclusive confirmation that a license plate is wanted. Additional investigation is always warranted when an alert is indicated.


IV. DAILY CHECKLIST and PATROL PROCEDURES

A. Daily Checklist

1. Officers will visually inspect the exterior cameras to ensure the lenses are clear and the cameras have not been altered in any way.
2. Download the most current data file of stolen and "of interest" vehicles containing all of the current NCIC information.
3. Manually add any license plate numbers of interest that warrant a law enforcement related alert.
4. LPR Operators should leave the LPR system operational while patrolling during the duration of the shift. The LPR screen can be minimized in the background and can be constantly operational even when on other calls or conducting preventative patrol.
5. LPR Operators can adjust the manner in which they drive to maximize the number of tags being read.
 - a. The front facing camera allows for the tags to be read in close proximity to the right front of the police vehicle.
 - b. The rear facing allows for tags to be read at a further distance in relation to the camera and is designed to capture tags on vehicles traveling the opposite direction of the police vehicle.
 - c. The side facing camera allows for tags to be read on vehicles in a parked position. This function is best utilized when driving in parking lots with a high volume of vehicles.
6. Officers must upload LPR data to the computer server at the end of each shift and confirm that the data transfer is complete.

B. Patrol Procedures


1. Use crime analysis to accurately target patrols in areas specifically related to crime trends where the collection of this data will benefit future and current investigations.

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2. Target areas should be small enough (usually less than a half mile wide) for patrol units to drive through every street within the hotspot in less than 30 minutes.
3. Staying in strategic locations for 30 minutes or less LPR Operators would be more effective in deterring criminal activity.
4. LPR Operators should be given 3-5 small crime strategic locations to patrol in a shift.
5. To maximize effectiveness, LPR Operators should move from strategic location to strategic location in a completely random fashion.
6. LPR Operators should use "sweep and sit" scheme.
7. "Sweep" each strategic location at least once for parked and moving vehicles.
8. "Sit" at certain locations, at the discretion of the LPR Operator, in which the probability of a suspect vehicle traveling by would be the greatest.

V. Responsibilities

- A. LPR Operators shall receive formal training prior to using the LPR system.
- B. LPR Operators shall exercise safety when operating the LPR system.
 1. Use of any device during the operation of a motor vehicle must comply with current State law including CMPD Policies and Directives.
 2. LPR Operators will pay careful attention to driving and will not use the LPR system in any manner that would endanger or distract them, resulting in an accident.
- C. It shall be the responsibility of each LPR Operator to ensure the download of the most recent hot list occurs on the mobile computer prior to deployment of the LPR equipment.
- D. When using an LPR-equipped vehicle, LPR Operators should have the system in operation to include a connection to the LPR server so as to maximize the opportunity to scan vehicles, compare them to the hot list and collect LPR data in a central repository.
- E. Upon receiving an alert, the LPR Operator will use the displayed information to determine the accuracy and nature of the alert. The LPR Operator will visually verify that the subject tag and the actual read on the LPR screen are the same (i.e. correct letters, numbers, state and any other information that can be matched).
- F. Once the LPR Operator has confirmed that the alert is valid, he or she shall take appropriate action based on the type of alert in accordance with training.

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1. If the alert is for a stolen or felony vehicle, the LPR Operator will confirm the alert is still active by running a check on the information through NCIC.
 - a. Receipt of a stolen or felony vehicle LPR alert may not rise to the level of reasonable suspicion and is certainly not sufficient probable cause to arrest without confirmation that the vehicle is still wanted.
 - b. If the alert is for another type of want, the LPR Operator will read the description of the alarm and use the appropriate action or reporting method. Confirmation of the alert is essential prior to the stop of any person.

- G. Ensure that all positive "hits" on the Terrorist Watch List are reported to the Terrorist Screening Center (TSC). All Terrorist Watch List hits will be handled by phone. There will be no radio traffic concerning Terrorist hits except in the case of emergencies. LPR Operators must be familiar with the (3) three levels of Terrorist.

Watch List hits:

1. Level (1) one stop hold and contact TSC
2. Level (2) two keep a visual and contact TSC for further instructions and do not alert subjects of your presence
3. Level (3) three document information, take no action, report information to TSC


- H. Some LPR Operators will be power users and may assist with the training of Operators, troubleshooting problems with the LPR system, helping their co-workers understand the value of the LPR system, and improving the operations of the LPR system.

VI. SUPERVISORS

- A. Supervisors will monitor the use of LPR systems and ensure they are being deployed regularly.
- B. Supervisors will ensure LPR systems are deployed during the shift by trained LPR Operators.
- C. The LPR systems should be deployed to maximize its ability to scan as many license plates as possible.
- D. The supervisor shall investigate any damage to LPR's in accordance with established procedures. Damage and any reports or documentation will be forwarded to the LPR Manager.

VII. LPR MANAGER

- A. The LPR Manager will determine how the LPR system will be integrated into CMPD patrol function and will also determine any restrictions for the use of the LPR system .
- B. The LPR Manager will validate training for LPR Operators to ensure LPR Operators

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are properly trained before accessing LPR data or participating in LPR field operations, to ensure training is timely and adequate, to ensure proper operations in accordance with this Standard Operating Procedure, and to ensure all training is documented.


- C. The LPR Manager will recommend policy changes to the Field Operations Deputy Chief in his or her chain of command.

VIII. DATA RETENTION and USE

- A. Data will be stored on CMPD database residing on a City of Charlotte server and will not be stored outside the control of the CMPD.
- B. All LPR-generated data will be purged after an 18-month retention period unless a longer retention period has been identified for court or investigative purposes.
 - 1. For retention beyond the 18-month retention period, officers must scan the "Exhibit Report" into KBCOPS.
 - 2. LPR Operators will be responsible for advising their supervisor when LPR data they marked for extended retention is no longer needed.
 - 3. The LPR system automatically erases stored data when the retention period has elapsed.
- C. Access to LPR data is restricted to CMPD personnel, in furtherance of a criminal justice purpose, LPR data may be shared verbally by a member of CMPD with another criminal justice agency. Any other use of this data is strictly forbidden.
 - 1. Users will be able to access the LPR data by providing the established user name and password. This access will allow for the user to query information as it pertains to vehicle tags read by the tag reader cameras.
 - 2. The LPR manager will determine the personnel to have access to the database for investigative queries and reports. Any requests for database access will be handled on a case by case basis and those granted access will be provided the user name and password for access.
 - 3. Information stored includes a photo of the registration plate showing the rear of the vehicle, a date and time stamp of when the registration plate was read by the LPR, and a GPS coordinate to identify the exact location the registration plate was read by the LPR.

IX. LPR MAINTENANCE

- 1. Neither the LPR equipment nor or software operating system shall be modified without direction from the LPR Manager.
- 2. Under no circumstances shall an LPR unit be connected to or removed from the vehicle while the LPR unit is powered up. Connection or disconnection of

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the camera unit from the LPR system when powered will result in significant damage to the LPR system.

3. Any time the LPR unit is disconnected or removed from the vehicle, it shall be placed in a protective storage case or the LPR's original packaging and secured to prevent damage.
4. LPR camera lenses may be cleaned with glass cleaner or mild soap and water and a soft, non-abrasive cloth.
5. Damage to LPR equipment shall be immediately reported to a supervisor. The supervisor shall document (and investigate, if necessary) any damage in accordance with established procedures. Damage will also be reported to the supervisor's Captain and the LPR Manager.
6. The LPR Manager shall be notified immediately of any LPR equipment needing maintenance or repair and ensure that all maintenance and repair of LPR equipment is completed.