


<b>EASTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT</b>		<b>Department Manual: Policy No. 1.19</b>
<b>Subject:</b>  <b>LICENSE PLATE READERS</b>		
<b>MASSACHUSETTS POLICE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS</b>		<b>GENERAL ORDER</b>
<b>REFERENCED:</b>		
<b>Issue Date: 03-06-2024</b> <b>Effective Date: 03-06-2024</b> <b>Revision Date:</b>	<b>Issuing Authority</b> <i>Robert J. Alberti</i> <b>Robert J. Alberti</b> <b>Chief of Police</b>	

## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide officers with guidelines on the proper use of License Plate Recognition (LPR) systems, also commonly known as license plate reader systems.

## II. POLICY

The availability and use of LPR systems have provided many opportunities for the enhancement of productivity, effectiveness, and officer safety. It is the policy of this agency that all members abide by the guidelines set forth herein when using LPR systems.

- A. The policy of the Easthampton Police Department is to utilize LPR 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 LPR are for the official use of this department. Because such data may contain confidential information, it is not open to public review.
- B. The LPR technology allows for automated detection of license plates along with vehicle make, model, color, and unique identifiers through the Easthampton Police Department's LPR system and the vendor's vehicle identification technology. The technology is used by the Easthampton Police Department to convert FBI/CJIS data associated with the vehicle license plates and vehicle descriptions 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, missing and exploited children, Silver Alerts, suspect interdiction, stolen property recovery, and to assist with active criminal investigations.

### III. DEFINITIONS

**FOUO:** For Official Use Only

**LPR:** License Plate Recognition

**OCR:** Optical Character Recognition

**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 LPR system.

**Alert:** A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the LPR system receives a potential “hit” on a license plate.

**Hit:** A read matched to a plate that has previously been registered on an agency’s “hot list” of vehicle plates related to stolen vehicles, wanted vehicles, or other factors supporting investigation, or which has been manually registered by a user for further investigation.

**Hot list:** License plate numbers of stolen cars, vehicles owned by persons of interest, and vehicles associated with Amber or Silver Alerts that are regularly added to “hot lists” circulated among law enforcement agencies. Hot list information can come from a variety of sources, including stolen vehicle information from the National Insurance Crime Bureau and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), as well as national Amber or Silver Alerts, etc. Departments of motor vehicles can provide lists of expired registration tags, and law enforcement agencies can interface their own, locally compiled hot lists to the LPR system. These lists serve an officer safety function as well as an investigatory purpose. In addition to agency supported hot lists, users may also manually add license plate numbers to hot lists in order to be alerted if and when a vehicle license plate of interest is “read” by the LPR system.

**Fixed LPR system:** LPR cameras that are permanently affixed to a structure, such as a pole, a traffic barrier, or a bridge.

**Mobile LPR system:** LPR cameras that are affixed, either permanently (hardwired) or temporarily (e.g., magnet-mounted), to a law enforcement vehicle for mobile deployment.

**Portable LPR system:** LPR cameras that are transportable and can be moved and deployed in a variety of venues as needed, such as a traffic barrel or speed radar sign.

### IV. PROCEDURES

#### A. General

1. The use of LPR systems is restricted to public safety-related missions of this agency.
2. LPR systems and associated equipment and databases are authorized for official public safety purposes. Misuse of this equipment and associated databases, or data, may be subject to sanctions and/or disciplinary actions.
3. LPR systems and LPR data and associated media are the property of this agency and intended for use in conducting official business only.

#### B. Administration

1. The agency shall designate an employee(s) with administrative oversight for LPR system deployment and operations who is (are) responsible for the following:
  - a. Establishing protocols for access, collection, storage, and retention of LPR data and associated media files;

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- b. Establishing protocols to preserve and document LPR reads and “alerts” or “hits” that are acted on in the field or associated with investigations or prosecutions;
  - c. Establishing protocols to ensure the security and integrity of data captured, stored, and/or retained by the LPR system;
  - d. Ensuring the proper selection of personnel approved to operate the LPR system and maintaining an adequate number of trainees;
  - e. Maintaining records identifying approved LPR deployments and documenting their results, including appropriate documentation of significant incidents and arrests that are related to LPR usage;
  - f. Authorizing any requests for LPR systems use or data access according to the policies and guidelines of this agency;
2. Designated, trained personnel shall check equipment on a regular basis to ensure functionality and camera alignment. Any equipment that falls outside expected functionality shall be removed from service until deficiencies have been corrected.
  3. LPR systems repairs, hardware or software, shall be made by agency-authorized sources.

### **C. License Plate Reader System Usage**

1. LPR operation and access to LPR collected data shall be for official agency purposes only.
2. Only officers who have been properly trained in the use and operational protocols of the LPR systems shall be permitted to use it.
3. LPR Alerts/Hits: Prior to initiation of the stop:
  - a. Visually verify that the vehicle plate number matches the plate number run by the LPR system, including both alphanumeric characters of the license plate and the state of issuance.
  - b. Verify the current status of the plate through dispatch or MDT query when circumstances allow.
4. In each case in which an alert or a hit is triggered, the user should record the disposition of the alert and the hit into the LPR system.
5. Hot lists may be updated manually if the user enters a specific plate into the LPR system and wants to be alerted when that plate is located. Whenever a plate is manually entered into the LPR system, the officer should document the reason.
6. Searches of historical data within the LPR system should be done in accordance with established departmental policies and procedures.

### **D. LPR Data Sharing and Dissemination**

1. LPR data should be considered FOUO and can be shared for legitimate law enforcement purposes.
2. Information sharing among agencies should be dictated in accordance with MOUs (memoranda of understanding) or established departmental policies or procedures.

**E. Permitted/Impermissible Uses**

1. The LPR system, and all data collected, is the property of the Easthampton Police Department. Department personnel may only access and use the LPR system for official and legitimate law enforcement purposes consistent with this policy. The following uses of the LPR system are specifically prohibited:
  - a. **Invasion of Privacy:** Except when done pursuant to a court order such as a search warrant, it is a violation of this policy to utilize the LPR to record license plates except those of vehicles that are exposed to public view (e.g., vehicles on a public road or street, or that are on private property but whose license plate(s) are visible from a public road, street, or a place to which members of the public have access, such as the parking lot of a shop or other business establishment).
  - b. **Harassment or Intimidation:** It is a violation of this policy to use the LPR system to harass and/or intimidate any individual or group.
  - c. **Use Based on a Protected Characteristic:** It is a violation of this policy to use the LPR system or associated scan files or hot lists solely because of a person's, or a group's, race, gender, religion, political affiliation, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or other classification protected by law.
  - d. **Personal Use:** It is a violation of this policy to use the LPR system or associated scan files or hot lists for any personal purpose.
  - e. **First Amendment Rights:** It is a violation of this policy to use the LPR system or associated scan files or hot lists for the purpose or known effect of infringing upon First Amendment rights.
2. Anyone who engages in an impermissible use of the LPR system or associated scan files, or hot lists, may be subject to criminal prosecution, civil liability, and/or administrative sanctions pursuant to and consistent with the collective bargaining agreement and department policies.

**F. Retention**

1. The period of LPR data retention shall be 30 days unless otherwise authorized by court order, or as determined by the Chief of Police.