



HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OPERATIONS POLICY

License Plate Reader

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| Distribution: | All Employees | | Policy Number: | OPS 0914 |
| Responsible Unit: | Special Operations Division | | Rescinds: | MAN 5600 |
| Original Issued Date: | 12/21/20 | Revision #: | 2 | Latest Revision Date: 02/27/26 |
| Required 3-Yr. Review was Completed: | 02/27/26 | | Next Review Due: | 03/31/29 |

1. Purpose

To provide guidelines regarding the access to and use of License Plate Reader (LPR) systems and data by members of the Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO).

2. Policy

The HCSO will utilize LPR technology for legitimate law enforcement purposes only. This policy has been adopted for the compliance with applicable laws protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. This policy outlines the use, analysis, retention, destruction, sharing and disclosure of protected information received and stored within the HCSO through the use of LPR technology. This policy applies to all HCSO Employees.

3. Definitions

ACTIVE DATA: any data collected by an LPR system and provided to an LPR operator in real-time in the form of alerts that a license plate number contained in the "Hot List" is near an LPR unit. This includes LPR data recorded during a patrol shift that is contained in the LPR and has not been transferred to a historical database server.

FIXED SYSTEM: the HCSO fixed LPR systems are non-vehicle mounted systems. They may be portable but are designed to monitor a specified public location or roadway. Fixed LPR systems may be used by HCSO or LPR users with approval and access to the server granted by the LPRS Administrator(s).

HISTORICAL DATA: any data collected by an LPR system and stored for future investigative or analytical use.

HOT LIST: list of license plates associated with vehicles of interest compiled from several databases. Vehicles of interest include but are not limited to; stolen vehicles or tags, vehicles belonging to or operated by wanted or missing individuals, and vehicles flagged by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA). The Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC) maintains the most current "Hot List" on its server, which is updated a minimum of twice daily.

LEGITIMATE LAW ENFORCEMENT PURPOSE:

- The investigation, detection, or analysis of a crime(s);
- The investigation of a violation of Maryland vehicle law(s);

- The investigation or location of persons known to be wanted or a terrorist or on a terror watch list; and/or
- The investigation, location and searching of missing or endangered persons; the subject of an Amber, Silver or Blue Alert.

LPR ADMINISTRATOR: a Special Operations Division (SOD) Traffic Supervisor along with a specially designated Police Operations Bureau (POB) Supervisor and an Electronic Services Technician will serve as the LPR Administrators for the HCSO.

LPR DATA: data obtained by the LPR include images of the license plates and vehicles on which they were displayed, and information regarding the date, time, and location they were viewed by the LPR.

LPR OPERATIONS CENTER: refers to HCSO access to the LPR Operations Center. The LPR Operations Center provides database, query, history tracking and reporting for the LPR program.

LPRS/LPR: the License Plate Recognition System (LPRS), also known as a License Plate Reader (LPR), provides automated detection of license plates. The LPR uses high speed cameras and computer technology to capture and convert data from electronic images of vehicle license plates into a readable format, and then compares the information against specified databases of license plates.

LPR TECHNICIAN: designated member of Information Technology (IT), the HCSO Electronic Services Unit (ESU), and/or the Special Investigations Division (SID) responsible for coordinating and/or performing the installation, updating and repair of the LPR equipment and software in designated LPR equipped vehicles or fixed site LPR equipment.

LPR USER: any sworn member of the HCSO who has attended **the Agency required** training course conducted by a certified LPR trainer and approved by the LPR Administrator(s). Users will have remote LPR monitoring capabilities from an HCSO Mobile Data Computer (MDC) or desktop computer. All POB Supervisors must complete the **Agency required** training course conducted by a certified LPR trainer and approved by the LPR Administrator(s).

MARYLAND COORDINATION AND ANALYSIS CENTER (MCAC): the MCAC is Maryland's Fusion Center which coordinates the efforts of federal, state, and local agencies to gather, analyze, and share information with law enforcement, public health, and emergency management personnel.

MOBILE SYSTEM: the HCSO Mobile LPR systems are affixed to HCSO vehicles, or imbedded in the in-car camera system, and interface with the vehicle's Mobile Data Computer (MDC). Mobile LPR systems will be operated from a moving or stationary vehicle for legitimate law enforcement purposes only.

USER ACCESS LEVEL: user access to the LPR system is controlled by a login name and password. There are several levels of access built into the system that allow for different roles within the system. Typical roles include administrator, operator, supervisor, and user. LPR roles and access will be assigned and maintained by the LPR Administrator(s).

4. Procedures

A. LPR Administrator(s) Responsibilities

1. Train personnel in the proper setup and use of LPR equipment and ensure records of those trained are sent to the Training Academy.

2. Assign user roles and maintain a list of personnel authorized to access and operate the LPR Systems and data.
3. Serve as a liaison with partner agencies including MCAC, Council of Government (COG), and LPR equipment vendors.
4. Coordinate all required updates and maintenance of LPR equipment with the designated LPR Technician in the ESU.
5. Confirm all historical LPR server data and HCSO local "Hot Lists" are purged in accordance with this policy.
6. Ensure all ELSAG LPR data is being transmitted/received and shared with MCAC via a Virtual Private Network (VPN). **Note: MCAC will only take LPR data for ELSAG.**
7. Log all local HCSO server query requests and ensure an audit trail is maintained which captures the following:
 - a. Date and time of the request;
 - b. Purpose of the request;
 - c. Incident or report number (physical record number) related to the query;
 - d. The identity of the agency requesting the query (including if the requester is from a local, state, federal or out-of-state agency);
 - e. The requester's name and contact information; and
 - f. The license plate number or other data elements used to query the LPR system.
8. Ensure an annual audit of the HCSO LPR data queries is conducted and an annual audit report is signed by the Sheriff or his designee and submitted to MCAC by February 24th each year.
9. Ensure a copy of the annual audit report is received by the Maryland Legislative Office by no later than March 1st each year.

B. LPR User Responsibilities

1. LPR users must attend **the Agency required** training course conducted by a certified LPR trainer and approved by the LPR administrator(s).
2. **LPR users will notify the LPR administrator(s) of any LPR equipment maintenance needs and will not contact LPR technicians or equipment vendors directly.**
3. **LPR users are responsible for the physical security of LPR equipment. LPR equipment will not be left in the passenger area or mounted to the exterior of a vehicle (unless permanently affixed) when the vehicle is not in service.**
4. **LPR users will not make any modifications to the hardware or software of the LPR.**

5. LPR users upon receiving an alert/hit must verify the information before any action is taken. Verification will be conducted through a live database query such as MVA, Maryland Electronic Telecommunications Enforcement Resource System (METERS), and/or National Crime Information Center (NCIC).
6. HCSO supervisors and investigative units will have the ability to enter specific data on the HCSO local LPR hot list for a legitimate law enforcement purpose.
7. LPR users must enter all traffic stops arising from an LPR alert in Electronic Traffic Information Exchange (ETIX) using arrest code "S."
8. LPR users must complete the arrest documentation for all LPR related stops and all arrest documentation for stops resulting in criminal citations, civil citations, or physical arrests (when closing ETIX for statistical purposes).
9. In the event an LPR alert directly leads to an arrest, the LPR user will perform a manual export of the LPR data from that alert. The LPR data printout will be scanned and attached to the original Records Management System (RMS) incident report, and a copy will be sent to the LPR administrator(s) via the "LPR Administrator" email group for statistical purposes.

C. Deputy Responsibilities

1. Deputies must enter all traffic stops arising from an LPR alert in ETIX using arrest code "S."
2. Deputies must complete the arrest documentation for all LPR related stops and all arrest documentation for stops resulting in criminal citations, civil citations, or physical arrests (when closing ETIX for statistical purposes).
3. From the OCR drop down menu selection titled LPR Initiated, deputies will select "Yes" to signify arrests originating from an LPR alert.

D. LPR Technician Responsibilities

1. The LPR technician will coordinate and facilitate the installation and repair of all LPR equipment with approved LPR equipment vendors.
2. The LPR technician will notify and coordinate with Information Technology (IT) prior to the ordering and/or installation of any new fixed site LPRs. Notification will also be made to IT when any issues are found with fixed site LPRs.
3. The LPR technician will ensure that the interface between LPR equipment, Agency MDC's and MCAC is maintained.
4. The LPR technician may serve as an approved LPR trainer upon the request of the LPR administrator(s).

E. Development of Vehicle License Plate "Hot Lists"

1. "Hot Lists" will contain data obtained from:

- a. NCIC stolen vehicle, stolen tag, temporary wanted felony vehicles, wanted persons files, terrorist watch list and the sexual registry;
 - b. Maryland MVA records of suspended drivers, suspended registration, license plate confiscation orders, and possibly wanted persons; and/or
 - c. Any additional data deemed of interest to law enforcement and included in the "Hot List" compiled by the Maryland State Police (MSP), to include, but not limited to: Amber, Silver, and Blue alerts.
2. Local "Hot List" entries with a legitimate law enforcement purpose may be made by **supervisors and/or investigative units**. The LPR user who enters data into the local "Hot List" is responsible for the removal of the entry once the need to monitor that data no longer exists.
- a. All data entered into the local "Hot List" will be required to have the following:
 - i. A local "Hot List" entry must include an end date;
 - (a) If the entry will be entered into NCIC/METERS, the end date/time must be within 24 hours after the entry date/time.
 - ii. A hot list note indicating the case type and requested actions to be taken if located; and
 - iii. A related incident number, if available.
3. Security of the "Hot List" will be consistent with MCAC directives, rules, regulations, laws, and procedures applying to the use of information from those databases and will be the responsibility of the LPR or user.
4. The "Hot List" does not contain real time data thus any alert received from the system will be confirmed through a live database query such as MVA, METERS, and/or NCIC prior to taking any law enforcement action.
5. LPR equipment can be deployed by LPR users for the following purposes:
- a. Enforcement of Maryland Vehicle Law;
 - b. Canvass of areas in which a felony is in progress and/or crime of violence has just occurred, to include the immediate area as well as likely routes of escape from that area;
 - c. Proactive patrols of areas likely to identify information valuable to criminal investigations and/or threats to homeland security, to include, but not limited: courthouses; local, state and government offices; shopping malls; hotels; restaurants; and nightclubs;
 - d. Special operations including, but not limited to, sobriety checkpoints, special security operations, and targeted enforcement details; and/or
 - e. Any additional circumstances deemed appropriate by a Division Commander or above to enhance public safety or perform law enforcement duties.

F. Limitations on Usage

1. Only trained employees will be permitted to operate LPR equipment.
2. Any such operator will be required to possess authorization to access NCIC and MVA files via the METERS system.

G. LPR Data

1. **ELSAG** LPR systems will transmit data to/from MCAC via an encrypted VPN as prescribed by the MCAC Standard Operating Procedure manual.
2. All LPR data will be held in accordance with this policy and MCAC policies and Maryland law.
3. All requests for data will be in accordance with this policy and MCAC policies, rules, and procedures.
4. Mobile LPR systems will not retain historical data on the associated MDC. Retention on mobile LPR systems will be set to one day and will be purged immediately upon successful system logoff by the LPR operator.
5. The LPR "Hot List" data is generated by the LPR Operations Center. It is not real time and may contain erroneous, flawed, or incorrect data. Any information received from captured plate data that is recognized as a positive "hit" against the "Hot List" must be verified before any action is taken. Verification will be conducted through a live database such as MVA, METERS, and/or NCIC.
6. Any use of the LPR server in violation of this policy may result in loss of LPR server access and other administrative actions per Agency policy.

H. LPR System Procedures

1. Trained and approved LPR **users** can accept or reject hits generated by mobile or fixed LPR systems.
2. Accepted hits will be verified against a live database such as MVA, METERS, and/or NCIC.
3. Once a hit is verified, the LPR **user** who verified the hit will generate a call for service or "Be On the Lookout (BOLO)" in regards to the verified hit.

I. Data Retention and Ownership

1. All LPR data is to be used for legitimate law enforcement purposes only.
2. All LPR data remains the property of the HCSO.
3. After 180 days of acquisition, all LPR data stored locally on the HCSO server will be automatically purged.

J. LPR Data Entry

1. Data may only be entered into a local “Hot List” for legitimate law enforcement purposes and should have a local case number and case type associated with it.
2. Entered data must have a beginning and end date. If the entry will be entered into NCIC/Meters, the end date/time must be within 24 hours after the entry date/time.
3. Data can only be added to the HCSO local server “Hot List.”

K. LPR Data Queries

1. LPR data may be accessed for legitimate law enforcement purposes only by a person of sufficient access level and should have a case number and case type associated with it.
2. All ELSAG queries should also be sent to MCAC for the purpose of leveraging access to additional LPR sites.
3. Locally stored data is limited to data collected only by LPR systems owned and operated by HCSO.
4. Exigent Queries – those queries of an immediate need may be performed on HCSO LPR server historical data by a person of sufficient access level.
 - a. Since MCAC has access to additional LPR sites all requests for historical data should still be made through the MCAC-LPR Operations Center 1-800-492-TIPS (8477), which is staffed 24 hours a day.
 - b. All queries of this sort will be documented by completing a supplemental report. The report will specifically detail reason for the search, the name of the user performing the search, the information inputted for the search, and whether the search resulted in “no information obtained” or “information was obtained”. If obtained information is disseminated to another person, the officer who searched the LPR database is responsible for also documenting this in the supplement
 - i. Example: On (date), Deputy (Name) conducted a search of the Harford County Sheriff’s Office LPR database regarding (case number). The search was based on (information from a witness, video, investigation, etc.). The data searched was (say what you inputted). From this search, (choose one) INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED/WAS NOT OBTAINED.
5. Crime Analysis
 - a. The Crime Analysis Unit may utilize locally stored data for law enforcement purposes (i.e., analysis of crime).
 - b. All queries will be documented as outlined in section 4.K.4.b of this policy.
6. All queries conducted for other law enforcement agencies require notification to the LPR administrator e-mail group.

- a. Requestors will complete form (SO-194) *LPR Request for Service*, and send to the LPR administrator e-mail group.

L. Audits

1. The primary goal of conducting an audit is to deter and discover any abuse of the HCSO LPR system.
2. Annually, 1% of all query requests of the HCSO LPR server with a minimum of 50 requests will be audited to ensure:
 - a. HCSO compliance with this policy and state and federal laws;
 - b. Members with access to and use of LPR data have been properly screened and trained; and
 - c. HCSO has adequate procedures related to the use of the LPR system, and that queries and information obtained through the LPR system are conducted, shared, and/or disseminated for legitimate law enforcement purposes.
3. The audit will be conducted by the SOD Lieutenant, or his designee and a report will be completed at its conclusion. The report must be signed by the Sheriff, or his designee and a signed color copy submitted to MCAC prior to February 24th each year.
4. The audit report will capture the following:
 - a. Date and time of the request;
 - b. Purpose of the request;
 - c. Incident or report number (physical record number) related to the query;
 - d. The identity of the agency requesting the query (including if the requester is from a local, state, federal or out-of-state agency);
 - e. The requester's name and contact information;
 - f. The license plate number or other data elements used to query the LPR system; and
 - g. The response to the query.
5. All audit reports and related audit forms/logs will be maintained for a period of no less than three years.

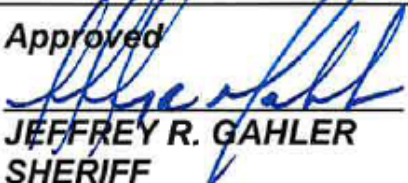
5. Summary of Changes

A. 3/30/2023 Revision number one

1. Removed outdated LPR procedures throughout policy as per SME's guidance.
2. Removed SO 194 "LPR Request for Service" guidance. Form archived (obsolete).

3. Included guidance for use of LPR stored data by the Crime Analysis Unit.
- B. On 02/27/26 the Agency 3-year review was conducted and the following revisions were made:
1. Replaced the reference to a four-hour training requirement for LPR Operators with “Agency required training” under Section 3. Definitions, under Section 4.B.1 LPR User Responsibilities.”
 2. Removed the reference under Section 4.B.2 LPR User Responsibilities that stated “LPR users will have remote LPR monitoring capabilities from an Agency MDC or desktop computer via the Enterprise Operations Center (EOC) server.”
 3. Added the following text under Section 4.B.2 LPR User Responsibilities:
 - a. LPR users will notify the LPR administrator(s) of any LPR equipment maintenance needs and will not contact LPR technicians or equipment vendors directly.
 - b. LPR users are responsible for the physical security of LPR equipment. LPR equipment will not be left in the passenger area or mounted to the exterior of a vehicle (unless permanently affixed) when the vehicle is not in service.
 - c. LPR users will not make any modifications to the hardware or software of the LPR.
 4. Edited text under Section 4.C.3 Deputy Responsibilities to indicate that deputies will utilize the OCR drop down menu selection titled LPR Initiated to signify arrests originating from an LPR alert.
 5. Revised text under Section 4.E.2 Development of Vehicle License Plate “Hot Lists” to indicate that “Local “Hot List” entries with a legitimate law enforcement purpose may be made by supervisors and/or investigative units.”
 6. Clarified under Section 4.G.1 LPR Data, that ELSAG LPR systems will transmit data to/from MCAC.
 7. Edited text under Section 4.K.2 LPR Data Queries to reflect that all queries should also be sent to MCAC for the purpose of leveraging access to additional LPR sites.
 8. Edited text under Section 4.K.4.a LPR Exigent Queries to clarify that due to MCAC having access to additional LPR sites, all requests for historical data should still be made through the MCAC-LPR Operations Center.
 9. Edited text under Section 4.K.4. LPR Data Queries, removed the reference to Non-Exigent Circumstances.

10. Added text at Section 4.K.6.a LPR Data Queries to clarify that requestors on behalf of other law enforcement agencies will complete form (SO-194) LPR Request for Service and send to the LPR administrator e-mail group.

Approved

JEFFREY R. GAHLER
SHERIFF
DATE 3.11.26