

	Onslow County Sheriff's Office ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER	Number: 4.6
	Subject: AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READERS	Effective Date: 04/24/2026
	Revised: 4/24/26	Pages: 4

AO 4.6.0 OBJECTIVE

Establish guidelines for the use of agency-operated automated license plate recognition (ALPR) systems, also commonly known as automated license plate readers (ALPRs).

AO 4.6.1 DEFINITIONS

Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) System - A system of one or more mobile or fixed cameras used in combination with computer software to capture images of license plates and convert those images into computer-readable data.

ALPR Data (Captured Plate Data) - Data collected by an ALPR system, including license plate numbers, images, date, time, and location information associated with a plate read.

Alert (Hit) - A notification generated by an ALPR system when a captured license plate matches a plate listed in an authorized database or hot list.

Hot List - A database of license plate numbers associated with vehicles or investigations of interest to law enforcement, including but not limited to stolen vehicles, wanted persons, or missing/endangered persons.

Law Enforcement Purpose - Actions related to criminal investigations, arrests, prosecutions, locating missing or endangered persons, or locating stolen vehicles.

AO 4.6.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Sheriff's Office that ALPR systems and their associated data be used to quickly identify vehicles of interest to further efficient and effective law enforcement operations, with consideration for public and member safety and protection of civil liberties. ALPR systems and associated data shall be used only for law enforcement purposes to identify vehicles, not people, and shall not be used for the enforcement of traffic violations.

GO 4.6.3 PROCEDURES

General

The use of ALPR systems and associated data is restricted to official purposes only. ALPR systems and associated data are the property of this agency and are intended for use in conducting official business.

This agency's members shall ensure that human verification occurs before any action is taken as a result of an ALPR hit, and before any data is entered into the system.

The Investigations Division Captain shall be responsible for overall program compliance with state law, policies, and auditing and reporting requirements.

ALPR System Usage

Only authorized members shall be permitted to access this agency's ALPR system and its associated data.

All authorized members shall be properly trained in the use and operational protocols of this agency's ALPR systems.

Members shall not initiate enforcement action solely on the basis of an ALPR alert without independent verification and appropriate legal justification. The verification may include:

1. Visually verifying that the vehicle plate number matches the plate number and state run by the ALPR system, including characters of the license plate and the state of issuance.
2. Confirming the source of the ALPR record and who acquired the data, to include, but not limited to: DCI/NCIC, RMS records, BOLOs, etc.
3. Considering the age and source of the alert and, if possible, verifying the status.

When law enforcement action is taken based on an alert, the member should record the action(s) taken, such as:

1. Gathering evidence.
2. Making arrests related to serious crimes.

Hot lists may be updated manually if an authorized member enters a specific plate into the ALPR system and requests notification when that plate is located. Hot list entries shall be based on legitimate law enforcement purposes and supported by specific and articulable facts. The reason for the manual update shall be documented. The authorized user shall set an expiration date for the manual entry.

The agency shall maintain records of system maintenance and calibration. The ALPR system shall be updated from authorized databases at least every 24 hours, or as soon as practicable when updates are available.

Searches of historical data within the ALPR system shall be done in accordance with established Sheriff's Office policies and procedures.

ALPR Data Sharing and Dissemination

ALPR data is confidential and not a public record. Any data shall be released only to criminal justice agencies for legitimate law enforcement purposes. Information sharing among agencies shall be conducted in accordance with GO 4.11 *Criminal Intelligence Procedures*. Any dissemination should be logged with details of the request and the individuals sending and receiving the data, when applicable. This should be done for all

hotlist entries, including those that are manually generated. For example, was this record acquired by the agency, a neighboring agency, a public works system, or a private/commercial entity?

Data should be collected from authorized public and private sources for the intended lawful purposes of this agency.

ALPR data shall not be sold or used for commercial purposes.

Unauthorized access, use, or dissemination of ALPR data may result in disciplinary action and is a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Preservation Request Procedure

Any law enforcement officer may request preservation of ALPR data when it is relevant to a criminal or missing person investigation.

The request shall be in writing and sworn and include:

1. Camera location(s).
2. License plate number(s).
3. Date and time frame.
4. Specific, articulable facts showing relevance.
5. Case identifier and involved parties (if known).

The request shall be submitted to the Investigations Division Captain and documented in the case file.

Upon receipt, the Investigations Captain shall immediately preserve the requested data.

Preserved data shall be destroyed one year from the date of the initial preservation request unless extended by a subsequent preservation request or legal process.

AO 4.6.4 RETENTION AND STORAGE OF DATA

ALPR data shall not be retained for more than 90 days from the date of capture unless:

1. A preservation request is made in accordance with N.C.G.S. §20-183.32.
2. A valid state or federal search warrant authorizes extended retention.

AO 4.6.5 AUDITING

This agency shall conduct an annual audit and review of access logs and data usage patterns to ensure that data is accessed and used appropriately. The report shall be submitted to the Sheriff each year.

Routine audits shall include:

1. Data quality and security audits to verify the accuracy, completeness, and security of this agency's ALPR data.

2. Review of system access logs to monitor who accessed ALPR data, when, and for what purpose.
3. Continued compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and internal policies governing ALPR use and data.

AO 4.6.6 TRAINING

Agencies shall ensure that ALPR users receive initial and refresher training to remain in compliance with current policies and regulations on ALPR usage and the distribution and retention of associated data.

Training shall include legal restrictions under N.C.G.S. Article 3D, including proper documentation, preservation request procedures, and restrictions on data access and dissemination.

BY ORDER OF SHERIFF CHRISTOPHER D. THOMAS
DIGITALLY SIGNED