



LICENSE PLATE READER

Directive: 14 – 102

Date of Issue: July 2013 Amends/Cancel: 14-115

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Directive is to establish guidelines for the deployment, maintenance, training, and data storage associated with the usage of License Plate Recognition (LPR) systems by Department of General Services Maryland Capitol Police (DGS-MCP) personnel.

II. POLICY

The LPR program seeks to increase the safety on Maryland roadways while reducing the impact of economic losses caused by auto theft and other vehicle-related crimes. The program is also intended to enhance security at designated locations by supplementing existing security measures. DGS-MCP is committed to homeland security, increasing the detection of stolen vehicles, vehicles with revoked or suspended registrations, uninsured vehicles, vehicles operated by drivers with suspended or revoked licenses, wanted and missing persons, and other vehicle related crimes that impact the safety of citizens.

All members of DGS-MCP will strictly adhere to the procedures set forth in this Directive.

III. BACKGROUND

- A. The identification of stolen vehicles, stolen license plates, and wanted and missing persons are the primary focuses of the LPR program. LPR technology uses specialized cameras and computers to quickly capture large numbers of license plate photographs and compares them to a list of plates of interest. The plates of interest are referred to as a “hot list.” LPR systems can identify a target plate within seconds of contact with it, allowing law enforcement to identify target vehicles that may otherwise be overlooked. LPR systems also record every license plate they come in contact with and record the location, date, and time of each license plate read. The technology is available in mobile systems mounted on police vehicles and fixed camera systems that can be mounted on poles or on the roadside. Mobile LPR systems are designed to allow officers to patrol at normal speeds while the system reads every license plate they come in contact with and alerts them if there is a match to a “hot list.”
- B. The Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC) will house the Department’s LPR System Operations Center, which is the central clearinghouse for all license plates scanned by the Department’s LPR systems. It is maintained by MCAC personnel designated by the MCAC Director. The Operations Center is a data collection and reporting tool. All collected data will be maintained on this independent server that is not connected to, or shared with, other law enforcement databases. The Operations Center provides a database, inquiry tool, history tracking, and reporting for the entire LPR program. It manages and provides a storage and search structure for the license plate information being collected in the field.

- C. The Operations Center acts as a secure intra-net site, allowing only personnel with password protected access to some or all of the license plate data collected. The Operations Center receives all scanned reads collected by fixed and mobile LPR systems deployed throughout the State and organizes the data into a central database. The central database supports the reporting and query functions. Authorized MCAC personnel have the ability to:
1. Look for a license plate or partial license plate in the history and view the image and location of matches;
 2. View maps with the location of plate reads and alarms;
 3. View statistical reports on reads and alarms; and
 4. View reads and alarms for a specific geographic area and time frame.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Installation and Maintenance

1. Fixed LPR systems will be installed at stationary positions throughout the State as determined by the Chief of Police or his designee.
2. Mobile LPR systems will be installed in DGS-MCP vehicles as determined by the Chief of Police or his designee.
3. DGS-MCP – Headquarters SUPPORT SERVICES will be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the LPR system equipment in DGS-MCP vehicles and at stationary locations.
4. SUPPORT SERVICES will be responsible for maintaining the detailed inventory record of all LPR system equipment.
5. SUPPORT SERVICES will be responsible for conducting an annual physical inventory of all LPR system equipment and reconciling it with their detailed inventory record. Once reconciled, the inventory will be forwarded to the State Property Unit.
6. The Commander, SUPPORT SERVICES, must pre-approve the installation or transfer of any LPR system.
7. The SUPPORT SERVICES will be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the Operations Center server, detachment and mobile LPR computer systems, and all related hardware and software.
8. Any damage to LPR systems should be reported immediately according to established DGS-MCP policy and procedures related to the loss of or damage to DGS-MCP equipment.

B. Department LPR Program Central Repository

1. The Director of MCAC will designate a Department LPR Program Administrator who will be responsible for the overall management of the data collection, storage, searches, and retention related to the Department's LPR Program. The Department LPR Program Administrator is also responsible for ensuring all "hot lists" are updated in a timely manner. The LPR Program Administrator will:
 - a. oversee and administer the LPR program, including the storage and management of all LPR data systems;
 - b. ensure all "hot lists" are updated in the Operations Center at the beginning of each shift and transmitted to the fixed and mobile LPR systems wirelessly;

- c. ensure stored data is purged from the LPR System Operations Center one year after it has been entered, unless it has evidentiary value as described in paragraph “D” of the section on Data Collection, Retention, and Dissemination;
- d. designate personnel who will be authorized to access the password protected data collected on the Operations Center server and conduct LPR stored data queries;
- e. ensure appropriate training of all MCAC personnel that utilize the Department’s LPR Operations Center prior to using the system;
- f. ensure all training is documented;
- g. ensure ongoing training is provided as needed; and
- h. grant written approval of any requests for LPR system use or data access according to established guidelines.

C. “Hot List” Updating

The Department LPR Program Administrator or designee will be responsible for logging into the Department’s LPR system website and updating the LPR system “hot lists” at the beginning of each shift. SUPPORT SERVICES should be contacted immediately if problems are encountered with the updating of LPR systems.

D. Data Collection, Retention, and Dissemination

1. All LPR system data collected by the Department’s LPR program will be maintained on the Operations Center server at MCAC which is not connected to or shared with any other law enforcement databases.
2. Only trained personnel approved by the LPR Program Administrator may access LPR system data on the Operations Center server at MCAC.
3. All LPR system data downloaded to the Operations Center will be stored no longer than one year prior to purging unless it has become, or it is reasonable to believe that it will become, evidence in a specific criminal or civil action. Evidentiary value in a criminal case includes both evidence that tends to inculcate or exculpate a suspect. To the extent that any data constitutes exculpatory evidence, also known as “Brady material” (Brady v. Maryland, 373 U.S. 83 (1963)), it must be preserved and made known to the prosecutor.
4. In those circumstances when data is identified as having evidentiary value, the LPR Program Administrator will review the facts of the specific cases and determine if the data should be saved. If the LPR Program Administrator determines it is reasonable to believe the data has evidentiary value, the Program Administrator will authorize the downloading of the applicable data from the LPR Program server onto a CD or other portable storage device.
5. This authorization will be documented on a Form 17 to be included in the appropriate case file. A copy of this documentation will be maintained in the LPR Program file at MCAC. The downloaded CD or other data storage device will be subject to the same logging, handling, and chain of custody requirements as other evidence.
6. All requests for access to data stored on the Operations Center server will be made in writing to the MCAC Director or designee.
7. All requests for data stored on the Operations Center server must serve an official law enforcement purpose.
8. Each request for access to data will be recorded on an LPR Program Data Query Log indicating the date received, the name and department of the requestor, the purpose of the request, applicable case number, the name of the MCAC employee processing the request, and the final status of the request.

9. The authorized personnel conducting the query must make the log entry. The log shall be retained for a minimum of current calendar year plus one year.

E. LPR Cleaning and Maintenance

LPR equipment should be cleaned and maintained according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

F. Mobile LPR Systems

1. LPR equipment provides access to stolen and wanted files, and is also used in furtherance of criminal investigations. Use is restricted to official law enforcement purposes.
2. No member may use or authorize the use of the equipment or database records for any other reason.
3. Mobile LPR systems will be installed in Department vehicles and deployed as directed by the Chief of Police or designee.
4. Commanders of personnel who are assigned mobile LPR systems will:
 - a. select the appropriate personnel to utilize LPR systems;
 - b. ensure they are properly deployed and maintained;
 - c. maintain an adequate number of properly trained personnel;
 - d. ensure all personnel assigned, utilizing, or maintaining mobile LPR systems are properly trained prior to using the system;
 - e. designate a supervisor as the installation's LPR program supervisor;
 - f. ensure all required LPR program logs and records are properly maintained according to policy;
 - g. ensure all significant incidents and arrests that are related to LPR usage are properly documented and this information is forwarded to the appropriate bureau chief; and
 - h. ensure that all mobile LPR system equipment is inspected each month and documented on the employee's Motor Vehicle Inspection Report . Any deficiencies will be immediately brought to the attention of the detachment commander or designee.
5. The mobile data computer in the vehicle will act as a video monitoring center. This is the central clearinghouse for all license plates scanned by the mobile LPR system. Collected data will be maintained on the mobile data computer and transmitted wirelessly to the Operations Center at MCAC.
6. "Hot lists" will be updated by the Department LPR Program Administrator or designee at the beginning of each shift. The updated "hot list" will be transmitted to the mobile LPR systems wirelessly. The LPR system will automatically purge all prior "hot list" data on the mobile data computer upon completion of the data transfers.
7. All scanned data on mobile data computers will be stored for 30 days. After 30 days, the LPR system will begin purging the data by automatically overwriting the data.
8. Daily Plate Reader Activity Logs, form MCP 40-1, will be submitted at the end of each shift by personnel using a mobile LPR system.
9. All Daily Plate Reader Activity Logs will be reviewed by a supervisor and forwarded to the installation LPR program supervisor.
10. A separate file will be maintained for each LPR system assigned to an installation. Each file will include all Daily Plate Reader Activity Logs submitted after LPR system usage.

11. All Daily Activity Log information submitted each month will be consolidated into one monthly Daily Plate Reader Activity Log for the installation. This report will be submitted to the LPR Program Administrator by the 5th of each month. A copy of the report will be filed and retained at the installation.
12. All Daily Plate Reader Activity Logs will be retained for remainder of the current calendar year plus one year.
13. All data scanned by the LPR system is transmitted to the mobile data computer inside the vehicle and checked against the daily "hot list." When an alarm is received alerting personnel of a positive "hit," a digital image of the license plate will be displayed on the mobile data computer screen for review.
14. Personnel who receive an alarm of a positive "hit" on a scanned license plate will compare the digital image of the license plate to the NCIC information to verify the "hit." Verified positive "hits" will be accepted by activating the "accept" alarm key on the video monitoring center screen. When an alarm does not result in a verified positive "hit," personnel will activate the "reject" alarm key.
15. Personnel will provide the information by radio to the local MCP installation's Police Communications Operator (PCO), who will immediately attempt to confirm the hit according to established policy.
16. The duty officer at DGS-MCP installation receiving notification of a positive "hit" will determine the appropriate response.
17. When an Officer locates a vehicle related to a positive "hit," the Officer will verify the license plate information and relay this information to the PCO who will confirm the "hit" according to current Department policy.
18. Commanders will be responsible for overseeing the LPR systems assigned to personnel under their command and ensuring compliance with Department policy.
19. Personnel assigned mobile LPR systems will be responsible for the following:
 - a. Logging onto the Department's LPR System website to activate the system and receive updated "hot lists" at the beginning of each shift.
 - b. Ensuring that personnel who receive a positive "hit" on a scanned license plate will compare the digital image of the license plate to the NCIC information to verify the "hit."
 - c. Providing information by radio to the local DGS-MCP installation's PCO who will immediately attempt to confirm the hit according to established policy.
 - d. Confirming a positive "hit" according to established policy prior to any enforcement action being taken.
 - e. Adding specific information after the initial upload of the fixed LPR system only if it becomes necessary. (The database can be "customized" by manually entering information. This option should only be utilized in cases where crimes are reported after the LPR has been deployed (e.g. stolen vehicles, AMBER alerts, radio item broadcasts, etc.) or when a manual plate check needs to be performed.)
 - f. Ensuring that all custom manual inputs have a specific criminal investigative or patrol purpose.
 - g. Ensuring that custom manual inputs are approved by the duty officer before their entry. Approval will be documented on the barrack CAD system.
 - h. Ensuring that all data is recorded daily on a DGS-MCP Form 40-1, DGS-MCP, Criminal Investigation Division, Daily Plate Reader Activity Log and submitted at the end of each shift.
 - i. Ensuring that all data from the mobile LPR system is transferred wirelessly to the Department's LPR System Operations Center server at MCAC.

20. The installation's LPR supervisor is responsible for the following:
 - a. Reviewing all DGS-MCP 40-1 forms, Daily Plate Reader Activity Logs to ensure they are properly completed.
 - b. Ensuring the commander is notified of all unusual or noteworthy events related to the LPR program.
 - c. Maintaining a separate file for each LPR system at the installation. Each file will include all Daily Plate Reader Activity Logs submitted after LPR system usage.
 - d. Consolidating all of the information into one Monthly Plate Reader Activity Log for the installation.
 - e. Submitting the installation's Monthly Plate Reader Activity Log to the Department LPR Program Administrator at MCAC by the 5th of each month. A copy of the file will be retained at the installation.
 - f. Retaining the Daily Plate Reader Activity Logs and the Monthly Plate Reader Activity Logs shall be retained for a minimum of the current calendar year plus one year.

G. Hit Verification

1. At this time, the LPR system does not interface with real time MILES and NCIC data.
2. The information received from license plates that are recognized as positive "hits" is dated and may be up to 24 hours old.
3. Personnel must verify all positive "hits" through MILES and NCIC and follow all departmental policies and procedures.
4. The LPR system is ONLY to be used as an investigative tool. Confirmation is essential prior to a stop.

H. Emergency Operations

1. During the course of normal law enforcement duties, incidents may occur that require immediate assistance. The LPR system can be a valuable tool in these situations, such as AMBER alerts, bank robberies, or other violent crimes and can help bring the incident to a safe and successful conclusion.
2. All license plate information related to an AMBER alert will be immediately entered into the Department LPR System by the Department LPR Program Administrator or designee. The "hot list" will be updated with AMBER alert information provided by Computer Crimes Unit personnel. The Department LPR Program Administrator or designee will ensure the timely wireless transfer to all LPR systems.
3. In the event of a critical situation with vehicle registration information, the deployment of a LPR system can maximize the coverage area to search for any vehicle involved.
4. Upon receiving notification that a critical situation requires manual entry of license plate information, the PCO must immediately review the details and notify the duty officer.
5. Upon receipt of updated information, the PCO will immediately provide this information to the duty officer and patrols. If an involved vehicle plate number changes, patrols using LPR equipment should be directed to update database entries.
6. All actions taken by the PCO should be documented on the detachment's CAD system.

7. LPR equipped vehicles should be directed to patrol areas which are likely to increase the chance of encountering the vehicle.
8. Personnel utilizing LPR systems must promptly search the vehicle LPR databases to determine if a record of past encounters exists. If so, information should immediately be provided to the duty officer for further investigative action.
9. The duty officer will contact the LPR Program Administrator or designee and request that the Operations Center's LPR server be searched to determine if any mobile or fixed LPR systems had previously encountered the target plate. Logs should be updated according to the previously cited general procedures.