

Automated License Plate Readers

425.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the capture, storage, and use of digital data obtained through the use of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology.

425.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include (Chapter 239, § 2, 2026 Laws):

Audit trail data - All forms of data collected or generated by an automated license plate reader system that identify how and when the system is accessed or used.

Automated license plate reader data (ALPR data) - Data collected by automated license plate reader systems including but not limited to global positioning system coordinates, location, date and time, speed of travel, photograph, license plate number, automobile characteristics, or other identifying information. "Automated license plate reader data" does not include audio or video recordings generated by an in-car or body-worn camera, unless such recordings are converted into computer-readable license plate characters or associated metadata, or are indexed, made searchable, or analyzed by license plate number, individual, vehicle, biometric identifier, or other unique identifier for the purpose of identifying, tracking, or reconstructing an individual's or vehicle's location.

Automated license plate reader system (ALPR) - A system, software, or computer algorithm, whether used independently or in combination with one or more mobile or fixed automated cameras, that is used to convert images of license plates into computer-readable data.

425.2 POLICY

The policy of the Auburn Police Department is to utilize ALPR 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 ALPR are for the official use of this department. Because such data may contain confidential information, it is not open to public review.

425.3 OPERATIONS

Reasonable suspicion or probable cause is not required before using an ALPR. Use of an ALPR is restricted to the following purposes (Chapter 239, § 3, 2026 Laws):

- (a) A comparison of ALPR data with data from databases maintained by the Washington Department of Licensing, the state criminal justice information system, the Federal Bureau of Investigation kidnappings and missing persons list, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children list, and the Washington missing persons list.
- (b) A comparison of ALPR data with data from a state or local government ALPR database if the officer performing the search documents that the license plate number or vehicle characteristics are relevant and material to an investigation of a vehicle that is stolen, associated with a missing or endangered person, registered to a person with an

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outstanding felony or gross misdemeanor warrant, or was involved in the commission of a felony or gross misdemeanor.

- (c) Enforcing parking restrictions.
- (d) Identifying vehicles in a database for impoundment or immobilization under a local ordinance, provided the database includes only license plates of vehicles subject to that ordinance.

A positive match from an ALPR alone does not constitute reasonable suspicion to stop a vehicle. Before conducting a traffic stop, officers shall either (Chapter 239, § 3, 2026 Laws):

- Develop reasonable suspicion for the stop independent from the ALPR match.
- Immediately confirm visually that the license plate on the vehicle matches the image of the license plate displayed on the ALPR and confirm by other means that the license plate number appears in one of the databases described in this section.

425.3.1 PROHIBITED USE OF THE ALPR SYSTEM

Members shall not use or allow others to use the ALPR equipment or data for any unauthorized purpose, including (Chapter 239, § 3, 2026 Laws):

- (a) Investigating or enforcing federal immigration matters.
- (b) Assisting with out-of-state investigations regarding protected health care services under chapter 7.115 RCW (e.g., abortion services).
- (c) Tracking or otherwise monitoring activity protected by the state and federal constitutions (e.g., free speech, assembly, protest).
- (d) Collecting ALPR data from facilities that provide health care or conduct immigration matters as defined by RCW 19.154.020, elementary and secondary schools, places of worship, courts, or food banks.

The Auburn Police Department shall not sell, lease, rent, or purchase ALPR data or audit trail data (Chapter 239, § 5, 2026 Laws).

425.4 DATA COLLECTION AND RETENTION

The Administration Division Commander is responsible for ensuring systems and processes are in place for the proper collection and retention of ALPR data. Data will be transferred from vehicles to the designated storage in accordance with department procedures.

All stored ALPR data shall not be retained for more than 21 days unless it is (Chapter 239, § 4, 2026 Laws):

- (a) Retained pursuant to a warrant issued by a court in a felony or gross misdemeanor case.
- (b) Retained as permitted by court order in civil or criminal cases.
- (c) Reasonable to believe it will become evidence in a criminal or civil action or is subject to a discovery request, subpoena, or other lawful action to produce records. In those

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circumstances, the applicable data should be downloaded onto portable media and booked into evidence.

- (d) Retained for the purpose of parking enforcement, provided that the data is deleted within 12 hours of the final disposition of the enforcement case.

When no longer needed, ALPR data shall be deleted according to the established records retention schedule.

425.4.1 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

ALPR systems may be used to compare captured data with:

Databases maintained by federal or Washington State agencies, including:

1. Department of Licensing
2. State Criminal Justice Information System
3. FBI Kidnappings and Missing Persons List
4. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
5. Washington Missing Persons List

License plates or vehicle characteristics entered into a Department or State ALPR database when an officer determines they are relevant and material to an investigation involving:

1. A stolen vehicle;
2. A missing or endangered person;
3. An outstanding felony or gross misdemeanor warrant;
4. A felony or gross misdemeanor.

The officer's determination shall be documented in the associated case file.

425.4.2 PARKING ENFORCEMENT

Parking enforcement personnel or authorized agents may use ALPR systems to:

1. Enforce restrictions on the use of parking spaces;
2. Identify vehicles subject to impoundment or immobilization under RCW 46.55.240.

425.4.3 TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC USES

Transportation agencies may use ALPR systems for:

1. Real-time traffic information;
2. Traffic modeling and studies;
3. Determining construction delays and route use;
4. Enforcing commercial vehicle systems at WSP enforcement sites and weigh stations.

425.4.4 REAL-TIME ALERTS

Real-time alerts may be generated **only** for the categories listed in Section 3.1.

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425.4.5 DATA OWNERSHIP

The Department is the legal owner of all ALPR data collected by its systems.

425.5 ACCOUNTABILITY

All data will be closely safeguarded and protected by both procedural and technological means. The Auburn Police Department will observe the following safeguards regarding access to and use of stored data:

- (a) All ALPR data downloaded to the mobile workstation and in storage shall be accessible only through a login/password-protected system capable of documenting all access of information by name, date, and time.
- (b) Members approved to access ALPR data under these guidelines are permitted to access the data only for lawful purposes.
- (c) ALPR system audits shall be conducted annually at a minimum and include a review of all access to and use of the ALPR system and the department's compliance with the data retention, purging, and sharing requirements of this policy (Chapter 239, § 8, 2026 Laws).
 1. Data elements used to query the ALPR and retained as audit trail data shall be used solely for auditing purposes and may not be searched, analyzed, compiled, or indexed for investigative purposes.
 2. Audit trail data shall be retained for two years and shall contain the information required by Chapter 239, § 8, 2026 Laws.

425.5.1 UNAUTHORIZED INVESTIGATIONS

Personnel shall not access, operate, or use ALPR systems or ALPR data for any investigative purpose not listed in Section 3.

425.5.2 IMMIGRATION, HEALTH CARE, OR CONSTITUTIONALLY PROTECTED ACTIVITIES

Personnel shall not access, operate, or use ALPR systems or ALPR data:

1. To investigate or enforce immigration laws;
2. To identify, track, or monitor individuals seeking or providing protected health care services;
3. To track or monitor constitutionally protected activities.

425.5.3 PROTECTED FACILITIES

Personnel shall not access, operate, or use ALPR systems or ALPR data to collect ALPR data on the premises, immediate surroundings, or access routes to or from protected facilities, including parking areas.

425.5.4 PRIVATE ALPR DATA

Personnel shall not access, operate, or use ALPR systems or ALPR data to obtain privately held ALPR data except pursuant to a valid, court-issued probable#cause warrant.

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425.5.5 UNAUTHORIZED SHARING

Personnel shall not access, operate, or use ALPR systems or ALPR data to disclose, share, or permit access to ALPR data except as authorized in Section 6.

425.5.6 DIRECT ACCESS

Personnel shall not access, operate, or use ALPR systems or ALPR data to provide direct access to any external entity unless expressly authorized by the Chief of Police.

425.5.7 DATABASE INTEGRITY

Personnel shall not access, operate, or use ALPR systems or ALPR data to use comparison databases that are not updated at least once every 24 hours.

425.5.8 COMMERCIALIZATION

Personnel shall not access, operate, or use ALPR systems or ALPR data to sell, lease, rent, or otherwise monetize ALPR data.

425.5.9 SECONDARY USE

Personnel shall not access, operate, or use ALPR systems or ALPR data to use ALPR data collected for one purpose for any other purpose.

425.6 DATA RETENTION

Default Retention - ALPR data shall not be retained longer than **21 days**, except as provided below.

425.6.1 EXCEPTIONS

Retention beyond 21 days is permitted only when:

1. **Warrants and Court Orders** - Data retained pursuant to a valid warrant, subpoena, or court order shall be deleted at the conclusion of the case per the applicable retention schedule.
2. **Parking Enforcement** - Data may be retained until **12 hours after final disposition** of the parking case, including appeals.
3. **Traffic Studies** - Data may be retained for up to **30 days**.
4. **Commercial Vehicle Enforcement** - Data may be retained for up to **6 months**.
5. **Evidence of Unlawful Conduct** - Data may be retained as long as needed as evidence of conduct described in Section 3.1.

425.6.2 PROHIBITION ON SECONDARY USE

Data collected for one purpose may not be used for any other purpose.

425.7 ACCESS, SHARING, AND DISCLOSURE

425.7.1 INTERNAL ACCESS

Access is limited to authorized personnel with a documented need consistent with these policies.

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425.7.2 EXTERNAL SHARING

ALPR data may be shared only:

1. As required in a judicial proceeding;
2. Pursuant to a valid court order, warrant, or subpoena;
3. In discovery under applicable court rules;
4. For bona fide research under RCW 42.48, with all data de-identified and approval by the Chief of Police.

425.7.3 PROHIBITED SHARING

ALPR data shall not be shared with:

1. Immigration enforcement agencies;
2. Any entity for commercial purposes;
3. Any entity seeking direct access unless authorized by the Chief of Police.

425.8 PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

ALPR data is exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act, chapter 42.56 RCW, except for bona fide research under RCW 42.48.

Audit trail data may be subject to disclosure, but unique identifiers must be redacted.

425.9 AUDIT TRAILS AND INTERNAL CONTROLS

425.9.1 REQUIRED AUDIT LOGS

The Department shall maintain audit logs documenting all access to the ALPR system, including:

1. Username and affiliated agency;
2. Date and time of access;
3. Query data elements;
4. Purpose of access, including offense type;
5. Associated call for service or case number;
6. Camera locations accessed;
7. All exports, downloads, or sharing of ALPR data;
8. Vendor-generated audit logs.

425.9.2 RETENTION

Audit logs shall be retained for **two years**.

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425.9.3 USE OF AUDIT LOGS

Query data elements retained as audit logs may be used **solely for auditing** and may not be searched, analyzed, compiled, or indexed for investigative purposes.

425.9.4 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT

The Department shall conduct an internal audit at least once per year to review:

1. All access to and use of the ALPR system;
2. Compliance with retention, purging, and sharing requirements.

425.9.5 VENDOR REQUIREMENTS

Vendor contracts shall require:

1. Access to all audit logs;
2. Ability to export logs;
3. Prohibition on vendor retention or secondary use;
4. Immediate reporting of any breach or unauthorized access.

425.10 TRAINING

All personnel with access to ALPR systems or data shall receive annual training on:

1. These policies;
2. SB 6002 requirements, as enacted or hereafter amended;
3. Privacy and civil liberties protections;
4. Audit and reporting obligations.

425.11 ANNUAL REPORTING

By **December 1** of each year, the Department shall publish a report including:

- (a) Number of matches resulting in traffic stops or arrests, and resulting prosecutions;
- (b) Number of stolen vehicles or plates recovered;
- (c) Number of preservation requests and disclosure orders received;
- (d) Number of times ALPR or audit data was shared with another government agency, including agency names;
- (e) Number of times ALPR data was accessed pursuant to a judicial warrant;
- (f) Policy changes affecting ALPR data collection, retention, access, or sharing;
- (g) Results of internal audits;
- (h) Total annual number of ALPR reads, searches, hits, and alerts;
- (i) Locations of ALPR cameras;
- (j) Any known or suspected unauthorized access, breach, or attempted breach.

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425.12 POLICY REVIEW AND REVISION

These policies should be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure continued compliance with state law and best practices.

425.13 RELEASING ALPR DATA

The ALPR data may be disclosed, shared, or accessed by other law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies only as required in a judicial proceeding or as otherwise permitted by law, using the following procedures (Chapter 239, § 5, 2026 Laws):

- (a) The agency makes a written request for the ALPR data that includes:
 - 1. The name of the agency.
 - 2. The name of the person requesting.
 - 3. The intended purpose of obtaining the information.
- (b) The request is reviewed by the Administration Division Commander or the authorized designee and approved before the request is fulfilled.
- (c) The approved request is retained on file.

Requests for ALPR data by non-law enforcement or non-prosecutorial agencies will be processed as provided in the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.