

**NEW CANAAN POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**SUBJECT:** License Plate Recognition

**GENERAL ORDER NUMBER:** 14-01-117

**I. PURPOSE/POLICY**

License Plate Recognition (LPR) systems are utilized by the New Canaan Police Department to assist in preventing crime and in the apprehension of criminal offenders. LPR systems utilize specialized cameras to capture license plate images and use computers to perform Optical Character Recognition (OCR) on those images. OCR values are stored data and can be searched compared to a stored list of license plates in LPR systems.

The purpose of this general order is to explain how LPR systems will be utilized by the New Canaan Police Department and how LPR systems will provide line units with useful information that can solve and prevent crime.

**II. RESPONSIBILITY**

It is the responsibility of all departmental personnel to adhere to this general order. It is the additional responsibility of the Commanders of the Operations and Staff Services Division to ensure compliance.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

A. The following terms, for purposes of this general order, shall be defined as follows:

1. Alert: A visual and/or auditory notice that is triggered when the LPR system receives a "hit" based on an OCR value associated with a license plate.
2. Hit: A read having OCR values corresponding to license plate values that have previously been placed in a hot list.
3. Hot list: License plate values associated with vehicles having law enforcement relevance, for example, stolen cars, vehicles associated with AMBER/SILVER Alerts, as well as vehicles related with criminal activity.
4. LPR: License Plate Recognition
5. LPR System: Includes a camera and an associated mobile data computer running LPR software, wherein the mobile data computer may exchange data with a central LPR data server.
6. Mobile LPR system: LPR systems which include cameras that are affixed, either permanently (hardwired) or temporarily (magnet-mounted), to a law enforcement vehicle.

7. OCR: Optical Character Recognition.
8. Portable LPR system: LPR systems which include cameras that can be temporarily deployed in stationary locations which include traffic barrels or speed radar signs.
9. Read: A data file comprised of digital images of license plates and vehicles, and which contains associated data used by the LPR system (i.e., OCR values, date, time, and geographic coordinates associated with the license plate/vehicle image capture).
10. System Operations Software: System Operations Software serves as a database, data management tool, inquiry tool, history tracking, and reporting interface for deployed LPR systems.
11. Authorized/Designated Personnel: Are staff employed by the New Canaan Police Department, including all certified officers, and civilian staff who have been granted permission by the Chief of Police or his designee, to access sensitive police data.

#### **IV. PROCEDURES (GENERAL POLICIES)**

- A. The LPR stores the plate value of each vehicle captured and tags it with meta data. Specifically identified plate values may be placed on a list. This list is referred to as a hot list. The hot list contains license plate values associated with vehicles having significance to law enforcement, for example, license plates associated with stolen vehicles, vehicles associated with wanted or missing persons, vehicles associated with AMBER/SILVER Alerts, as well as those reasonably believed to be involved with recent criminal activity.
- B. The New Canaan Police Department's (NCPD's) LPR system serves as a database, data management tool, inquiry tool, history tracking, and reporting interface for deployed Mobil LPR systems. The system operations software operates within a secured networked environment that allows license plate read data access to only authorized personnel for law enforcement purposes only. The system operations software receives all LPR reads collected by NCPD mobile and portable LPR systems, and organizes the data into a central database. This central database supports a reporting and query function in which authorized NCPD personnel have the ability to:
  1. Search for LPR reads that may match a license plate or partial license plate;
  2. Generate maps showing the location of LPR reads and alarms;
  3. Create metrics based reports utilizing LPR reads and alarms; and
  4. Segregate LPR reads and alarms associated within geographic or time based boundaries.

**V. PROCEDURES**

**A. Use, Installation & Maintenance**

1. LPR systems facilitate access to databases that contain stolen vehicles and wanted person files for the purpose of supporting criminal investigations. As such, the operational use of LPR systems is restricted to authorized users for official law enforcement purposes.
2. Mobile and portable LPR systems may only be used in vehicles or locations approved by the Chief of Police or his designee.
3. Designated NCPD personnel and/or Town IT personnel shall be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the LPR system equipment in NCPD vehicles or temporary locations, and shall be specifically responsible for the installation and maintenance of the system operations software on the system operations, mobile data computer, and all computer hardware and software related to the LPR systems.
4. Designated personnel shall be responsible for maintaining a detailed inventory record of all LPR system equipment in the custody of NCPD.
5. Designated personnel shall be responsible for conducting an annual physical inventory of all LPR system equipment and reconciling that physical inventory with the detailed inventory record.
6. LPR equipment shall be cleaned and maintained according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
7. Any damage to LPR systems shall be reported immediately according to established NCPD policy and procedures related to the loss/damage to NCPD equipment.

**B. LPR Program Administrator**

1. The Commander of Staff Services shall designate a NCPD LPR Program Administrator who will be responsible for the overall management of LPR data collection, maintenance, searches, and retention related to NCPD's LPR systems. The NCPD LPR Program Administrator is also responsible for ensuring all hot lists are updated in a timely manner. The LPR Program Administrator will serve as the LPR systems custodian and shall:
  - a. Oversee and administer the storage and management of all LPR data;
  - b. Ensure all hot lists are updated in the system operations software and are transmitted to the portable and mobile LPR systems as necessary;
  - c. Ensure that all data stored in the LPR system is purged or segregated in accordance with the Department's data retention schedule.
  - d. Ensure that LPR data that is related to an investigation is segregated, protected and stored as evidence;
  - e. Designate personnel authorized to access the secure data collected on the systems operations software server and conduct LPR stored data queries;
  - f. Ensure appropriate training of all NCPD personnel that utilize NCPD's LPR system operations software prior to those personnel using the system;

- g. Ensure all training is documented; and
- h. Ensure ongoing training of personnel is provided as needed. Training shall be performed at least annually and more frequently as deemed necessary.

C. Hot List Updating and Storage

1. The NCPD LPR Program Administrator or designee shall be responsible for updating the LPR system hot lists pursuant to this policy. Designated personnel shall be contacted immediately if problems are encountered with the updating of any LPR system.
2. Each hot list shall be retained for a period of time corresponding with the retention of the LPR systems reads that were compared against that hot list.

D. Data Collection, Retention, and Dissemination

1. Data collected by the NCPD LPR systems will be maintained on the system operations server utilizing the system operations software.
2. Only trained personnel approved by the LPR Program Administrator may access LPR system data on the system operations server.
3. LPR data on the system operations server shall be stored for a period not to exceed **14 days** from the creation date, unless such data becomes subject to preservation obligation or other legal obligation requiring retention. All hot lists shall be retained for a period of time coterminous with the retention of the LPR systems reads that were compared against that hot list. In the event that LPR system read data becomes subject to legal obligation to retain, the associated hot list shall be preserved.
4. In those circumstances when a retention obligation arises, purging will be immediately suspended with respect to the data subject to the obligation requirements as other electronic evidence.
5. In the event that LPR data is retained as evidence in an investigation, the data shall be subject to established NCPD logging, handling, and chain of custody procedures and policies.
6. LPR data shall not be electronically shared with agencies or jurisdictions outside of New Canaan.
7. All requests for data stored on the system operations server shall be considered in view of applicable laws, statutes, regulations, and policy.
8. Each request for access to data will be recorded on an LPR Program, Data Query Log indicating the date received, the name of the NCPD employee processing the request and the final status of the request.
9. Authorized personnel conducting the LPR data query must make the LPR Program Data Query Log entry. The LPR Program Data Query Log shall be retained for a minimum of the current calendar year plus one year.
10. As directed by the Chief of Police, random audits shall be conducted on the use of the LPR data. The audits shall be conducted on a bi-annual basis and shall be documented.

E. Mobile and Portable LPR Systems

1. Mobile LPR and Portable LPR systems will be deployed as directed by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

2. Supervisors of personnel who are assigned mobile or portable LPR systems shall:
  - a. Select the appropriate personnel to utilize LPR systems;
  - b. Ensure the LPR systems are properly deployed and maintained;
  - c. Maintain an adequate number of properly trained personnel;
  - d. Ensure all personnel assigned, utilizing, or maintaining LPR systems are properly trained prior to accessing the system;
  - e. Ensure all required LPR program logs and records are properly maintained according to policy;
  - f. Ensure all incidents that involve an LPR hit and arrests that are related to LPR usage are properly documented in LEAS by utilizing an LPR sub type; and
  - g. Be responsible for overseeing the LPR systems assigned to personnel under their command and ensuring compliance with NCPD policy.
  - h. Ensure that LPR data is downloaded to the server no later than the duty shift which it was utilized.
3. Hot lists shall be updated as necessary by the NCPD LPR Program Administrator or designee. The updated hot list will be transmitted to the LPR systems. The mobile data computer associated with the mobile and portable LPR systems will automatically purge all prior hot list data upon completion of the data transfers.
4. When an alarm is received alerting personnel of a potential hit, a read record will be displayed on the mobile data computer screen. Such read record will include a digital image of the captured license plate.
5. Personnel who receive an alarm of a hit shall compare the digital image of the license plate to the NCIC information to verify the hit. Verified hits shall be accepted by activating an "accept" alarm key displayed on the mobile data computer screen. When an alarm does not result in a verified hit, personnel shall activate the "reject" alarm key.
6. Personnel shall transmit the hit information by radio to dispatch and shall attempt to confirm the hit according to current policy.
7. When an officer locates a vehicle related to a hit, the officer shall verify the license plate information and relay this information to dispatch who will confirm the hit according to current NCPD policy.
8. Personnel assigned mobile or portable LPR systems shall be responsible for the following:
  - a. Logging onto NCPD's LPR system to activate the system and receive updated "hot lists" at the beginning of each shift.
  - b. Ensure that personnel who receive a hit on a scanned license plate compare the digital image of the license plate to the NCIC information to verify the hit.

9. Providing information by radio to dispatch and dispatch shall attempt to confirm the hit according to established policy by:
  - a. Prior to taking action the hit shall be confirmed according to current policies and procedures.
  - b. Adding specific information after the initial upload of the fixed LPR system only if it becomes necessary, such as in cases where crimes are reported after the LPR has been deployed (e.g. stolen vehicles, AMBER alerts, SILVER alerts, radio item broadcasts, etc.), or when a manual plate check needs to be performed. Such updates shall be uploaded to the system operations server automatically, and such update will result in the generation of an updated hot list that will be transmitted to each deployed LPR system in use.
  - c. Ensuring all custom manual inputs have a specific criminal, investigative or patrol purpose.
  - d. Ensuring that all data from the mobile LPR system is transferred to NCPD's systems operations server.

**F. Hit Verification**

1. The LPR system does not interface with real time COLLECT and NCIC data.
2. It should be recognized that information derived from license plates is compared against information on the hot list which may be up to 24 hours old.
3. Personnel **shall** verify all hits through COLLECT and NCIC and follow all NCPD policies and procedures.
4. The LPR system is **ONLY** to be used as an investigative tool. Hit confirmation is essential prior to a stop.

**IV DISTRIBUTION**

This general order will be reproduced in electronic and traditional media. All sworn personnel shall have access to Department general orders through a read-only file on their individual domain of the Department's computer network. Printed copies and/or CD's will also be placed in locations throughout headquarters so that they are easily accessible to all personnel.

**V EFFECTIVE DATE**

This general order approved by the Police Commission on: April 16, 2014.

Per Order,

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Leon M. Krolikowski  
Chief of Police