



AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READERS

Community Information on ALPR and Flock Camera Use

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs), including Flock cameras, capture license plate information from vehicles visible on public roads. The Sheriff's Office implements specific policies and training related to the use of these systems. The following summarizes those policy safeguards and the County's oversight role.

The security of information and ensuring only authorized access to the system is a top priority.

- ALPR use is limited to official and legitimate law enforcement purposes.
- Access is restricted to authorized personnel who have completed required training.
- Access to stored data must be logged by name, date, time, law enforcement case/incident number, and the specific information reviewed.
- The policy requires annual audits of law enforcement data requests.
- *Carpenter v. United States* addresses cell-site location information and does not specifically govern ALPR use. Courts have generally found that legitimate law enforcement use of ALPR technology does not violate the Fourth Amendment because vehicles are visible on public roads, including under the plain-view doctrine.

Alerts are verified to reduce the risk of action based on inaccurate or outdated information.

- When practicable, deputies should verify an ALPR alert through the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System before taking enforcement action based solely on the alert.
- Hotlist hits must be verified against the Master Record prior to taking enforcement action.

Safeguarding data ensures privacy and protects individual rights.

- ALPR data must be stored in a secure, password-protected system that documents all access.
- Procedural and technological safeguards are required to protect information, privacy, and civil liberties.

Data retention and sharing is limited and in accordance with applicable laws.

- ALPR data may be shared only with California law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies for official purposes and as permitted by law.
- ALPR data is not shared with federal agencies.
- Access and use are logged for audit purposes. Non-law-enforcement requests are referred to the Investigative Services Bureau Chief and processed through the Records Division.
- ALPR data is generally retained for at least one year and may then be purged unless it is needed as evidence or is subject to a lawful records requirement.

The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors has some authority over the County's use of ALPR technology.

The Board of Supervisors has authority over certain aspects of the County's use of ALPR technology, including County funding, contracts, public oversight, and some policy requirements. The Sheriff is independently elected, however, and the Board cannot direct individual investigations or the day-to-day law enforcement operations of the Sheriff's Office. Additionally, the Board generally does not control cameras operated by incorporated cities within the county or private entities.

The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office credits ALPR technology in assisting our efforts to protect all life and property and to provide service, security, and safety to the community. Below are recent examples of how this technology is used to aid investigations.

- **September 2025 - Homicide**

A missing person's investigation quickly became a homicide investigation when the victim went missing from a jobsite in rural Arroyo Grande. The boyfriend of the missing person provided information to investigators that was inconsistent with information attained from ALPR records. The ALPR data allowed detectives to immediately recognize the criminal activity and treat the investigation as a homicide. Detectives reviewed ALPR data for the victim's vehicle and the boyfriend's vehicle, which ultimately led to the discovery of another vehicle suspected to be involved in the victim's disappearance. As the investigation continued, ALPR data was critical in finding the victim's vehicle in Fresno County, where it was discovered abandoned and burned in an apparent attempt to conceal evidence. The investigation ultimately determined the victim had been murdered by her boyfriend. The boyfriend and his brother then drove in two separate vehicles to rural Fresno County where they attempted to conceal her remains, and burn the victim's vehicle. ALPR information was crucial to the overall success of this investigation.

- **February 2026 - Grand Theft**

The felony theft of merchandise from a business in Nipomo was linked to multiple thefts throughout the state. Investigators were provided with a suspect vehicle description from witnesses and video surveillance. ALPR information was reviewed and a suspect and associated vehicle were positively identified. An alert was placed on the vehicle, notifying detectives if the vehicle would enter San Luis Obispo County. Several days later, the detective received an alert that the suspect vehicle had returned. Detectives visually confirmed the suspect and the vehicle and detained the suspect without incident. Within the vehicle detectives discovered over \$12,000 worth of stolen property from thefts committed throughout the state.

- **April 2026 - Burglary**

Sheriff's patrol deputies contacted a subject in his vehicle which contained stolen property. The stolen property was determined to be from a burglary of a business in a nearby city. Aware of other recent unsolved commercial burglaries in San Luis Obispo County, investigators reviewed ALPR information of the suspect's vehicle. They were able to confirm that the same vehicle was seen approaching and departing the areas during the times of the recent burglaries. As the investigation continued, search warrants led to the recovery of additional stolen property. The ALPR data, coupled with other physical and electronic evidence ultimately found the suspect to be linked to seven commercial burglaries in San Luis Obispo County and additional burglaries in the cities of Lompoc and Tracy, and the counties of Santa Barbara and Stanislaus.

- **August 2026 - Elderly Missing Person**

An 82-year-old woman was reported missing by a friend who had lost contact with her five months prior. The missing person was reported to be living in her travel van, and last seen in Palm Springs, Ca. The reporting party was concerned for her welfare, as he routinely spoke with her by phone, but he had lost contact with her in April, 2026. ALPR systems were searched and an alert set for the missing person's vehicle. Within three days of making the missing person report, law enforcement was notified that the missing person's vehicle was captured on ALPR in the County of San Luis Obispo and in the City of Paso Robles. Officers responded to the general area and were able to locate the vehicle and make contact with the missing person. Her welfare was confirmed and her name was removed from the missing persons system. The speed in which the ALPR system was able to identify her whereabouts saved countless hours of investigative methods otherwise used to locate missing persons.