



**LICENSE PLATE READERS:
IMPACT AND USE POLICY**

APRIL 11, 2021

SUMMARY OF CHANGES BETWEEN DRAFT & FINAL POLICY

Update	Description of Update
Removed statement that LPRs do not use artificial intelligence and machine learning.	Public comments highlighted a lack of industry-standard definitions for artificial intelligence and machine learning.
Expanded upon LPR device capabilities.	Added language clarifying LPR capabilities.
Expanded upon LPR rules of use.	Added language clarifying LPR rules of use.
Expanded upon LPR safeguards and security measures.	Added language regarding information security. Added language to reflect the removal of access to LPR data when job duties no longer require access.
Expanded upon covert LPR data retention.	Added language to reflect NYPD obligations under federal, state, and local record retention laws.
Expanded upon LPR external entities section.	Added language to reflect NYPD obligations under the local privacy laws.
Grammar changes.	Minor syntax edits were made.

ABSTRACT

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) uses license plate readers (LPRs) to help NYPD personnel locate stolen or wanted vehicles, vehicles connected to AMBER alerts, Silver alerts, missing persons reports, abductions reports, and vehicles connected to other crimes. Within seconds, LPRs can notify NYPD personnel that a queried license plate has passed within the device's range, allowing NYPD investigators to take immediate action in furtherance of public safety.

The NYPD produced this impact and use policy because LPRs are capable of capturing images of license plate numbers on passing vehicles, identifying the location of the vehicle at the time of recording, and sharing that information with NYPD personnel.

CAPABILITIES OF THE TECHNOLOGY

LPRs are specialized cameras that quickly capture images of license plate numbers affixed to vehicles that pass within the LPRs sensory range. An internal processor then converts the image of the license plate into a text the computer can process. This text is automatically compared against administrative databases containing enumerated lists of license plates of interest (i.e. stolen, wanted, etc.). LPRs are capable of properly functioning day or night, and in a variety of weather conditions.

NYPD makes use of two (2) kinds of LPRs: stationary and mobile. Stationary LPRs are permanently affixed to a specific location and record the license plates of all vehicles that pass within the LPR range. Mobile LPRs are attached to various NYPD vehicles and use the same technology to capture images of license plates the vehicle passes as it moves. Both stationary and mobile LPRs record a vehicle's license plate number and state of issuance, an images of a the vehicle and the license plate, and the date, time and location the vehicle passed the LPR.

NYPD officers operating a NYPD vehicle imbedded with a NYPD tablet¹ will receive an alert if the LPR scans a vehicle of interest, such as a vehicle reported stolen.

A limited number of authorized NYPD personnel can access a national commercial LPR data repository. LPR data obtained using NYPD LPRs or through the commercial repository cannot be used to track a vehicle in real-time.

NYPD LPRs do not use any biometric measurement technologies.

RULES, PROCESSES & GUIDELINES RELATING TO USE OF THE TECHNOLOGY

NYPD LPR policy seeks to balance the public safety benefits of this technology with individual privacy. LPRs in a manner consistent with the requirements and protection of the Constitution of the United States, the New York State Constitution, and applicable statutory authorities.

¹ For additional information on NYPD tablets, please refer to the Portable Electronic Device impact and use policy.

Court authorization is not sought prior to NYPD use of LPRs. Motor vehicles are heavily regulated by the government. The field-of-view of the LPRs utilized by the NYPD is strictly limited to public areas and locations. LPRs capture images of license plates that are readily observable to any member of the public.

NYPD LPRs may only be used for legitimate law enforcement purposes. LPRs do not by themselves establish probable cause for an arrest, but provide NYPD investigators with valuable leads. The NYPD limits authorized use of LPRs to the following circumstances:

1. Routine vehicle patrol;
2. Creation of alerts for specified complete or partial plate numbers; and
3. Capture movement of specified complete or partial plate numbers that momentarily pass the device.

In accordance with the Public Oversight of Surveillance Technology Act, an addendum to this impact and use policy will be prepared as necessary to describe any additional uses of LPRs. NYPD investigations involving political activity are conducted by the Intelligence Bureau, which is the sole entity in the NYPD that may conduct investigations involving political activity pursuant to the *Handschu* Consent Decree.

No person will be the subject of police action solely because of actual or perceived race, color, religion or creed, age, national origin, alienage, citizenship status, gender (including gender identity), sexual orientation, disability, marital status, partnership status, military status, or political affiliation or beliefs.

The misuse of LPRs will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

SAFEGUARD & SECURITY MEASURES AGAINST UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS

LPR data is accessible by using the NYPD Domain Awareness System (DAS)². DAS is confidential-password-protected and access is restricted to only authorized users. Authorized users consist only of NYPD personnel in various commands, whose access has been requested by their commanding officer, and approved by the Information Technology Bureau (ITB).

DAS access is limited to authorized users who are authenticated by username and password. Access to DAS is limited to NYPD personnel with an articulable need to use the software in furtherance of a lawful duty. DAS access to LPR data is removed when access is no longer necessary for NYPD personnel to fulfill their duties (e.g., when personnel are transferred to a command that does not use the technology).

Access to the commercial repository is limited to authorized users who are authenticated by username and password. Access to the repository is limited to NYPD personnel with an articulable need to use the software in furtherance of a lawful duty. Access is removed when access is no longer necessary for NYPD personnel to fulfill their duties (e.g., when personnel are transferred to a command that does not use the technology).

² For additional information on DAS, please refer to the DAS impact and use policy.

longer necessary for NYPD personnel to fulfill their duties (e.g., when personnel are transferred to a command that does not use the technology).

LPR data can be downloaded and retained in an appropriate NYPD computer or case management system. Only authorized users have access to the data. NYPD personnel utilizing computer and case management systems are authenticated by username and password. Access to case management and computer systems is limited to personnel who have an articulable need to access the system in furtherance of lawful duty. Access rights within NYPD case management and computer systems are further limited based on lawful duty related to the official business of the NYPD. Access levels are only granted for functions and abilities relevant to individual commands.

The NYPD has a multifaceted approach to secure data and user accessibility within NYPD systems. The NYPD maintains an enterprise architecture (EA) program, which includes an architecture review process to determine system and security requirements on a case by case basis. System security is one of many pillars incorporated into the EA process. Additionally, all NYPD computer systems are managed by a user permission hierarchy based on rank and role via Active Directory (AD) authentication. Passwords are never stored locally; user authentication is stored within the AD. The AD is managed by a Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) to restrict/allow port access. Accessing NYPD computer systems remotely requires dual factor authentication. All data within NYPD computer systems are encrypted both in transit and at rest via Secure Socket Layer (SSL)/Transport Layer Security (TLS) certifications which follow industry best practices.

NYPD personnel must abide by security terms and conditions associated with computer and case management systems of the NYPD, including those governing user passwords and logon procedures. NYPD personnel must maintain confidentiality of information accessed, created, received, disclosed or otherwise maintained during the course of duty and may only disclose information to others, including other members of the NYPD, only as required in the execution of lawful duty.

NYPD personnel are responsible for preventing third parties unauthorized access to information. Failure to adhere to confidentiality policies may subject NYPD personnel to disciplinary and/or criminal action. NYPD personnel must confirm the identity and affiliation of individuals requesting information from the NYPD and determine that the release of information is lawful prior to disclosure.

Unauthorized access of any system will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES RELATING TO RETENTION, ACCESS & USE OF THE DATA

Data recorded by NYPD LPRs is accessible through DAS. All NYPD authorized users may only access DAS to execute their lawful duties by making official inquiries, which relate only to official business of the NYPD. Historical searches of LPR data may be conducted:

1. To determine if specified complete or partial plate numbers were detected by one or more fixed or mobile LPRs;
2. To identify all complete plate numbers detected by one or more fixed LPR during a specified time period;
3. To identify all complete plate numbers detected by a mobile LPR mounted on one or more specified vehicles during a specified time period;
4. To identify all complete plate numbers detected within a specified area during a specified time period; and
5. To identify preceding or subsequent complete plate numbers associated with one or more specified complete or partial plate numbers detected by one or more fixed or mobile LPRs in order to identify possible associates.

Data collected through NYPD's LPRs is retained for five (5) years.

Access to the commercial LPR repository is critically limited and may only be accessed by select NYPD personnel for legitimate law enforcement purposes. The commercial repository will not be used unless there is an articulable reason to believe the queried vehicle has left the boundaries of NYC.

LPR data may only be used for legitimate law enforcement purposes or other official business of the NYPD, including in furtherance of criminal investigations, civil litigations, and disciplinary proceedings. Relevant data will be stored in an appropriate NYPD computer or case management system. NYPD personnel utilizing computer and case management systems are authenticated by username and password. Access to computer and case management is limited to personnel who have an articulable need to access the system in furtherance of lawful duty. Access rights within NYPD case management and computer systems are further limited based on lawful duty.

The Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York Local Government Records (the Schedule) establishes the minimum length of time local government agencies must retain their records before the records may be legally disposed.³ Published annually by the New York State Archives, the Schedule ensures compliance with State and Federal record retention requirements. The NYC Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS) publishes a supplemental records retention and disposition schedule (the Supplemental Schedule) in conjunction with the Law Department specifically for NYC agencies in order to satisfy business, legal, audit and legal requirements.⁴

³ See N.Y. Arts & Cult. Aff. Law § 57.19 - 25, and 8 NYCRR Part 185.

⁴ See NYC Charter 3003.

The retention period of a “case investigation record” depends on the classification of a case investigation record. The classification of case investigation records is based on the final disposition of the case, i.e., what the arrestee is convicted of or pleads to. Further, case investigations are not considered closed unless it results in prosecution and appeals are exhausted, it results in a settlement, it results in no arrest, or when restitution is no longer sought.

Case investigation records classified as a homicide, suicide, arson (first, second or third degree), missing person (until located), aggravated sexual assault (first degree), course of sexual conduct against a child (first degree), active warrant, or stolen or missing firearms (until recovered or destroyed), must be retained permanently. Case investigation records classified as a fourth degree arson or non-fatal (including vehicular accidents) must be retained for a minimum of ten (10) years after the case is closed. Case investigation records classified as any other felony must be retained for a minimum of twenty-five (25) years after the case is closed. Case investigation records classified as a misdemeanor must be retained for a minimum of five (5) years after the case is closed. Case investigation records classified as a violation or traffic infraction must be retained for a minimum of one (1) year after the case is closed. Case investigation records classified as an offense against a child as defined by the Child Victims Act, excluding aggravated sexual assault (first degree), course of sexual conduct against a child (first degree), must be retained until the child attains at least age fifty-five (55). Case investigation records connected to an investigation that reveals no offense has been committed by an adult must be kept for a minimum of five (5) years after the case is closed. Case investigation records connected to an investigation that reveals the individual involved was a juvenile and no arrest was made or no offense was committed must be kept for at least one (1) year after the juvenile attains age eighteen (18).

Personal information data files on criminals and suspects must be retained for at least five (5) years after the death of the criminal or suspect, or ninety (90) years after the criminal or suspect’s date of birth as long as there has been no arrest in the last five (5) years, whichever is shorter. Personal information data files on associated persons, such as victims, relatives and witnesses must be retained as long as, or information as part of, relevant case investigation record.

The misuse of any data will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES RELATING TO PUBLIC ACCESS OR USE OF THE DATA

Members of the public may request data obtained from the NYPD’s use of LPRs pursuant to the New York State Freedom of Information Law. The NYPD will review and evaluate such requests in accordance with applicable provisions of law and NYPD policy.

EXTERNAL ENTITIES

If a LPR obtains data related to a criminal case, the NYPD will turn the data over to the prosecutor with jurisdiction over the matter. Prosecutors will provide this data to the defendant(s) in accordance with criminal discovery laws.

Other law enforcement agencies may LPR data from NYPD in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and New York City and NYPD policies. Additionally, the NYPD may provide LPR data to partnering law enforcement and city agencies pursuant to on-going criminal investigations, civil litigation, and disciplinary proceedings. Information is not shared in furtherance of immigration enforcement.

Authorized agents within the state of New Jersey (NJ) have limited access to the NYPD LPR recorded data. Authorized agents of NJ law enforcement agencies are capable of conducting a search for pings of a specific license plate against NYPD owned or accessed LPR readers. However, NJ Authorized Agents do not have access to DAS.

Following the laws of the State and City of New York, as well as NYPD policy, information stemming from LPR use may be provided to community leaders, civic organizations and the news media in order to further an investigation, create awareness of an unusual incident, or address a community-concern.

Pursuant to NYPD policy and local law, NYPD personnel may disclose identifying information externally only if:

1. Such disclosure has been authorized in writing by the individual to whom such information pertains to, or if such individual is a minor or is otherwise not legally competent, by such individual's parent or legal guardian and has been approved in writing by the Agency Privacy Officer assigned to the Legal Bureau;
2. Such disclosure is required by law and has been approved in writing by the Agency Privacy Officer assigned to the Legal Bureau;
3. Such disclosure furthers the purpose or mission of the NYPD and has been approved in writing by the Agency Privacy Officer assigned to the Legal Bureau;
4. Such disclosure has been pre-approved as in the best interests of the City by the City Chief Privacy Officer;
5. Such disclosure has been designated as routine by the Agency Privacy Officer assigned to the Legal Bureau;
6. Such disclosure is in connection with an investigation of a crime that has been committed or credible information about an attempted or impending crime;
7. Such disclosure is in connection with an open investigation by a City agency concerning the welfare of a minor or an individual who is otherwise not legally competent.

Government agencies at the local, state, and federal level, including law enforcement agencies other than the NYPD, have limited access to NYPD computer and case management systems. Such access is granted by the NYPD on a case by case basis subject to the terms of written agreements between the NYPD and the agency receiving access to a specified system. The terms of the written agreements also charge these external entities with maintaining the security and confidentiality of information obtained from the NYPD, limiting disclosure of that information without NYPD approval, and notifying the NYPD when the external entity receives a request for that information pursuant to a subpoena, judicial order, or other legal process. Access will not be given to other agencies for purposes of furthering immigration enforcement.

The NYPD purchases LPRs and associated equipment or Software as a Service (SaaS)/software from approved vendors. The NYPD emphasizes the importance of and engages with vendors and contractors to maintain the confidentiality, availability, and integrity of NYPD technology systems.

Vendors and contractors may have access to NYPD LPRs associated software or data in the performance of contractual duties to the NYPD. Such duties are typically technical or proprietary in nature (e.g., maintenance or failure mitigation). In providing vendors and contractors access to equipment and computer systems, the NYPD follows the principle of least privilege. Vendors and contractors are only allowed access on a “need to know basis” to fulfill contractual obligations and/or agreements.

Vendors and contractors providing equipment and services to the NYPD undergo vendor responsibility determination and integrity reviews. Vendors and contractors providing sensitive equipment and services to the NYPD also undergo background checks.

Vendors and contractors are legally obligated by contracts and/or agreements to maintain the confidentiality of NYPD data and information. Vendors and contractors are subject to criminal and civil penalties for unauthorized use or disclosure of NYPD data or information.

If LPR data is disclosed in a manner violating the local Identifying Information Law, the NYPD Agency Privacy Officer, upon becoming aware, must report the disclosure to the NYC Chief Privacy Officer as soon as practicable. The NYPD must make reasonable efforts to notify individuals effected by the disclosure in writing when there is potential risk of harm to the individual, when the NYPD determines in consultation with the NYC Chief Privacy Officer and the Law Department that notification should occur, or when legally required to do so by law or regulation. In accordance with the Identifying Information Law, the NYC Chief Privacy Officer submits a quarterly report containing an anonymized compilation or summary of such disclosures by City agencies, including those reported by the NYPD, to the Speaker of the Council and makes the report publically available online.

TRAINING

NYPD officers using LPRs receive command level training on the proper operation of the technology and associated equipment. Officers must operate NYPD LPRs in compliance with NYPD policies and training.

INTERNAL AUDIT & OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS

Supervisors of personnel utilizing LPRs are responsible for security and proper utilization of the technology and associated equipment. Supervisors are directed to inspect all areas containing NYPD computer systems at least once each tour and ensure that all systems are being used within NYPD guidelines.

Any search conducted in DAS relating to LPR associated information is auditable by ITB.

All NYPD personnel are advised that NYPD computer systems and equipment are intended for the purposes of conducting official business. The misuse of any system or equipment will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties. Allegations of misuse are internally investigated at the command level or by the NYPD Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB).

Integrity Control Officers (ICOs) within each Command are responsible for maintaining the security and integrity of all recorded media in the possession of the NYPD. ICOs must ensure all authorized users of NYPD computer systems in their command understand and comply with computer security guidelines, frequently observe all areas with computer equipment, and ensure security guidelines are complied with, as well as investigating any circumstances or conditions which may indicate abuse of the computer systems.

Requests for focused audits of computer activity from IAB, Commanding Officers, ICOs, Investigations Units, and others, may be made to the Information Technology Bureau.

HEALTH & SAFETY REPORTING

There are no known health and safety issues with LPRs or associated equipment.

DISPARATE IMPACTS OF THE IMPACT & USE POLICY

The safeguards and audit protocols built into this impact and use policy for LPRs mitigate the risk of impartial and biased law enforcement. LPRs capture images of vehicle license plates utilizing NYC's public roadways. LPRs do not use any biometric measurement technologies.

The NYPD is committed to the impartial enforcement of the law and to the protection of constitutional rights. The NYPD prohibits the use of racial and bias-based profiling in law enforcement actions, which must be based on standards required by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, Sections 11 and 12 of Article I of the New York State Constitution, Section 14-151 of the New York City Administrative Code, and other applicable laws.

Race, color, ethnicity, or national origin may not be used as a motivating factor for initiating police enforcement action. Should an officer initiates enforcement action against a person, motivated even in part by a person's actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, or national origin, that enforcement action violates NYPD policy unless the officer's decision is based on a specific and reliable suspect description that includes not only race, age, and gender, but other identifying characteristics or information.