University of Arizona Police Department

Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) Program – Community FAQ

The University of Arizona Police Department (UAPD) uses Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology to enhance campus safety, support investigations, and help protect students, faculty, staff, and visitors. This document answers common questions and outlines how UAPD ensures responsible, legally compliant use of this technology.

1. **Where are ALPR cameras installed on campus?**

Cameras are placed only in public rights-of-way or other areas where there is no expectation of privacy.

2. What is an Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR)?

An ALPR is a fixed camera system that captures images of license plates as vehicles pass. The system converts the plate into text and stores limited data about the vehicle's characteristics, including make, model, color, and direction of travel. Many crimes involve the use of a vehicle, and a license plate can provide an objective investigative lead.

3. Does ALPR technology conduct searches that violate a person's constitutional right to privacy?

No. An ALPR does not conduct a search, because it obtains information about a vehicle's exterior that is in public in plain view, including the vehicle's government-issued license plate that is designed to provide information about that vehicle to law enforcement authorities, among others. ALPR technology is therefore consistent with constitutional rights and reasonable expectations of privacy.

4. How has the ALPR system supported UAPD investigations?

While specific cases cannot always be publicly detailed, ALPR data has:

- Provided immediate leads in violent-crime investigations
- Identified suspect vehicles minutes after crimes occurred
- Helped recover stolen vehicles on or near campus
- Assisted in locating individuals in crisis or at risk

The technology has repeatedly generated leads that previously would not have existed.

5. Why does UAPD use ALPR technology?

ALPRs help UAPD:

- Locate stolen or wanted vehicles
- Respond to AMBER, Silver, Turquoise, and Missing Persons Alerts
- Identify vehicles linked to violent crimes or property crimes
- Assist with check-welfare calls and credible public-safety threats
- Provide investigative leads during time-sensitive incidents

6. Do our ALPRs track individuals or monitor driving habits?

Our ALPRs capture brief, moment-in-time images (not video) of a vehicle as it passes a fixed camera. As noted above, the system records the license plate and an image that includes basic vehicle characteristics — nothing more. It does not follow a vehicle, monitor a person's movements, or independently generate conclusions about where someone has been or where they are going.

Investigative use of ALPR data involves a law enforcement professional reviewing the individual images and associated timestamps and determining what, if anything, they indicate.

In short, the ALPR provides snapshots; the analysis, context, and decision-making remain entirely with trained law enforcement personnel.

The ALPR does not:

- Identify who is driving or riding in the vehicle, except in rare situations where occupants are already openly visible in public view (such as in a convertible or on a motorcycle)
- Determine who the vehicle is registered to
- Connect to records with the department of transportation or motor vehicle division to look up personal information
- Provide or store personal identifying information like names, addresses, or dates of birth of anyone associated with the license plate
- Use facial recognition or biometric technology
- Capture vehicle speed

7. How long does UAPD retain ALPR data?

UAPD retains ALPR image-specific data for 7 days. Any retention beyond 7 days is allowed only when the information is part of an active investigation and must include supervisor approval and written investigative justification. All other image data is automatically deleted by the system once it reaches the 7-day limit.

8. Who can access ALPR data?

Access to the ALPR system is limited to UA public safety personnel who have a demonstrated, job-related responsibility justifying access to the information. All ALPR database searches must be tied to:

- A case/event number, or
- An active investigation, or
- A documented public-safety purpose

All access is logged, time-stamped, and audited. Misuse is strictly prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.

9. Does the ALPR system enforce immigration laws or monitor reproductive-health access?

No. UAPD policy prohibits:

- Use of ALPR data for federal civil immigration enforcement
- Monitoring access to reproductive health care or related activities

10. Does UAPD have any measures in place to protect privacy and prevent ALPR misuse?

Yes. UAPD employs strong legal, technical, and supervisory safeguards, including:

- Prohibitions on monitoring activity protected by the First Amendment
- Encryption of all data in transit and at rest
- Audits of searches and data sharing
- Mandatory training for all authorized users
- Detailed access logs with supervisory review

11. Can ALPRs work at night or in poor weather?

Yes. ALPR cameras use infrared and low-light imaging to accurately capture plates:

- At night
- In rain or low-visibility conditions
- At higher speeds
- In shadowed or glared environments

12. Has the ALPR system supported other agencies' investigations?

Yes. UAPD has provided legally authorized ALPR data to vetted partner agencies when their investigations intersect with campus or involve public-safety threats.

All requests require Criminal Investigations Unit Commander approval, must meet policy requirements, and are fully logged and audited.

Federal agencies do not have direct access to UAPD ALPR data.

13. Is this technology used to monitor protests or First Amendment activity?

No. The system only reads license plate information and the data is only used for legitimate investigative/analytic public-safety purposes.

14. How does UAPD ensure community transparency?

UAPD maintains a Transparency Portal that displays:

- The number of ALPR cameras in operation
- The number of alerts by source and topic
- The number of searches conducted with top search types
- The list of agencies with which UAPD shares data

This ensures the campus community can clearly see how the system is used and who has approved access.