

**SENECA FALLS POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDER**

General Order: 505	Rescinds:
Subject: License Plate Reader	NYS Accreditation:
Effective Date: 08/30/2016 By Order Of: Stuart W. Peenstra, Chief of Police	

- I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this order is to establish guidelines on the use, maintenance, and accountability of department owned license plate reader systems.
- II. **POLICY:** It is the policy of the Town of Seneca Falls Police Department to utilize technological advancements to further enhance our ability to identify stolen vehicles, conduct electronic surveillance, recover stolen vehicles, identify wanted or missing persons, and strictly enforce the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law.
- III. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - A. **LICENSE PLATE READER DEVICE (LPR)** – A specialized camera and computer system that is capable of quickly capturing license plate numbers from vehicles and then converting them into text that is automatically compared against a list of license plate numbers that pose a special interest (i.e. stolen, wanted/missing persons, suspended, revoked). An LPR can identify a target plate within seconds and alert the operator that a plate on a “hot list” has been detected. An LPR system can be mobile, mounted on a department owned vehicle, fixed, set at a particular location, or covert (i.e., hidden and used for electronic surveillance).
 - B. **“HOT LIST”** – An electronic list of special interest license plates which is provided by the state of New York and Seneca County. The list is updated daily and stored locally on a dedicated mobile data terminal (MDT) with LPR software. The hot list can be updated automatically. Special interest plates are linked to a unique detailed alert message in order to quickly notify the LPR operator that a plate on the hot list has been detected.
 - C. **Enterprise Operations Center (EOC)** – A database of information collected by LPR systems operated by various LE agencies throughout Seneca County. The EOC database can be searched with full or partial plate information to determine if a special interest plate has been recorded and stored. The collected data includes an image of the recorded plate, the date and time and a Global Positioning System (GPS) location. The system also has the capability to alert users via email and cell phone when a plate of special interest has been detected.
- IV. **PROCEDURE:**
 - A. **OPERATOR RESPONSIBILITY**
 - 1. Only members that have received training in the proper use and operational protocols of the LPR are authorized to utilize the equipment. If you are a member who has been trained in the use of the LPR, you will utilize the LPR at all times.
 - 2. Operators are responsible for inspecting LPR equipment before use and making the appropriate notifications if the equipment is in need of repair or maintenance.
 - 3. Operators should make certain that the LPR camera lenses are set at the proper angle and clean to ensure proper operation. Lens cleaning should only be accomplished by using a soft cloth and an appropriate glass cleaning solution.

4. Operators are not authorized to change factory specifications or make adjustments to the LPR system. Required adjustments will be performed by authorized personnel only.
5. Before each use, operators should ensure that the most recent "hot list" has been down loaded to the system.
6. Operators should not use or rely on the LPR if the "hot list" is outdated by a 24 hour period.
7. Operators should be aware that the LPR presents a potential distraction to the operator. Operators must exercise extreme caution when using LPR systems while driving.
8. Operators should be aware that the LPR system utilizes infra-red lighting and may be used at night as well as day; rain or snow may limit the effectiveness of the system.
9. LPR systems are transportable and, with permission from the Chief or Lieutenant, may be transferred to system outfitted vehicles or a fixed location. Covert LPR systems will only be used with approval by the Chief or Lieutenant.

B. LPR ALARM ACTIVATION

1. The LPR will alert the operator with various alarm tones when a plate number has been recognized from the "hot list".
2. Operators must be familiar with tone types and prepare to act accordingly.
3. Alert tones are sounded for various reasons to include but not limited to:
 - a. Stolen vehicle.
 - b. Wanted/missing persons.
 - c. Stolen plate, in or out of state.
 - d. Suspended/revoked registration.
 - e. Various scofflaws.
 - f. Amber alerts.
 - g. Plates manually entered.
4. Upon receiving an alarm activation, operators will assess the alarm and either accept or reject the alarm. Alarms that appear to be legitimate will be accepted and automatically tagged in the database to include GPS location. False or ghost activations should be rejected.
5. Accepted alarms do not always mandate enforcement action. The plate may have been entered into the system for the purpose of observation only or to identify the vehicle's activity and location of activity.
6. Upon the receipt of an accepted alarm, operators shall, as safely as possible, verify the information via radio with dispatch before taking enforcement action. Enforcement action cannot be based exclusively on an LPR alarm unless verified first by the Seneca County E-911 Center. Operators must closely examine the totality of circumstances in building probable cause to take an enforcement action.

7. Operators should use discretion while reviewing alarms and should be guided by General Order# 503, "Traffic Enforcement," reference to appropriate enforcement action based on possible Department of Motor Vehicles errors, clerical mistakes, or insurance company mix-up.

C. MANUALLY ADDING PLATES

1. Operators may manually enter plate numbers or partial plate numbers with special interests (i.e. recent stolen vehicle, amber alerts, local POI)
2. Before manually entering plate numbers, operators should make certain that the information is true, accurate and for a legitimate law enforcement purpose (e.g., subject of a point of information broadcast).
3. Operators should be aware that plate information that is manually entered will not be retained following any subsequent "hot list" upload and will need to be re- entered if it remains a plate of interest.

D. Enterprise Operations Center (EOC)

1. The LPR system is designed to automatically download batches of data collected by multiple LPR systems countywide. The information is maintained in a county database at the Seneca County Law Enforcement Center, which will be shared by all law enforcement agencies.
2. The EOC database will be stored on a Seneca County computer network and maintained by the Seneca County Department of Information Technology.
3. Levels of security will be established for the database access.
4. Operators may only access the database and review collected information for legitimate law enforcement purposes.
5. The use and dissemination of LPR data shall be governed by General Order, #115, "Use and Dissemination."
6. Record retention for LPR data will be based upon the New York State Department of Education MU-1 schedule for retention.
7. The LPR database is located within the EOC web based "favorites" shortcut link on all SFPD computers. Click the link and then go to "EOC Log IN". This is a password protected database. The database can be accessed through the assistance of an investigator or Shift Supervisor for county wide only. Patrol Officers will only be able to access Seneca Falls Police Department database.