



Washington Association of

**SHERIFFS &
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AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READER TECHNOLOGY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs) have been in use since the 1970s and have proven to be an effective public safety tool. As technology continues to improve and become more affordable, many Washington law enforcement agencies have begun to utilize it to increase public safety in their communities. Sheriffs and Police Chiefs have solved crimes ranging from homicides and bank robberies to stolen cars and possession of stolen property. ALPRs have also proven to be effective tools in investigations of assaults, hit-and-runs, and locating missing and endangered people. Public safety tools like ALPRs are not deployed to erode freedoms but to protect them, aiding real victims harmed by those who exploit vulnerability. They are tools used for accountability, checked by policy, law, and law enforcement's professional ethic.

We acknowledge recent concerns that ALPR data was accessed for federal immigration purposes. Washington law enforcement agencies cannot and do not engage in civil immigration enforcement. We understand that most, if not all, of the instances of ALPR data being accessed by federal immigration authorities were the result of a software update that changed sharing permissions without the knowledge or consent of the agency. We continue to remind our members to be aware of their system restrictions to ensure that their data is only shared consistent with Washington law and agency policy.

Many jurisdictions in Washington have experienced the abuse of Washington's public records laws, which allow any person to access these records. There are no state laws that prohibit access to the data through public disclosure. The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) welcomes a productive conversation with the legislature and others on how to prevent the Public Records Act from being used as a vehicle to access information with no legitimate public interest. This is part of why WASPC adopted a [model policy](#) nearly 20 years ago specifying that ALPR data should only be accessed for official agency purposes, and ALPR data not related to a criminal investigation be purged after 60 days. These policies, however, do nothing to prevent this data from being accessed via the Public Records Act, with no limitations on its use whatsoever.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the legislature to craft thoughtful changes to protect driver privacy by limiting access to ALPR data via the Public Records Act.

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