



TENNESSEE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION • TENNESSEE ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 20, 2026

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Tennessee Sheriffs and Police Chiefs Support Responsible Use and Accountability for License Plate Reader Technology

Associations support legitimate public safety uses while calling for clear safeguards, meaningful oversight, and real consequences for misuse.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Sheriffs' Association (TSA) and the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police (TACP) today announced a joint initiative to advance the responsible use of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR/LPR) technology by Tennessee law enforcement.

Together, the associations are developing recommended principles and model-policy guidance informed by national law-enforcement standards, Tennessee law, evolving case law, privacy considerations and the operational experience of Tennessee sheriffs and police chiefs. They anticipate presenting recommendations to the General Assembly before the 2027 legislative session.

The associations seek to preserve the legitimate public safety value of ALPR technology while establishing clear expectations for access, use, retention, information sharing, oversight and accountability.

License plate reader systems use cameras to capture images of publicly displayed license plates and convert that information into computer-readable data, which may then be compared against records associated with legitimate law-enforcement purposes. ALPR technology can help locate stolen vehicles, find missing and endangered persons, identify vehicles associated with wanted persons, and develop leads in serious criminal investigations. At the same time, the ability to collect, search, retain, and share location information creates a significant responsibility for the agencies and the personnel entrusted with access.

"Our starting point is straightforward: the sheriffs of Tennessee remain committed to adamantly protecting the constitutional rights of our citizens. We strongly support the proper and transparent use of this technology as an investigative tool," said Sheriff Michael Van Dyke of Robertson County, President of the Tennessee Sheriffs' Association. "But increasingly capable technology requires equally clear expectations for how it is used, who can access it, and what happens when those expectations are violated."

Responsible Use and Accountability

The associations are considering safeguards that include:

- Requiring a documented, legitimate law-enforcement purpose for ALPR use and searches.
- Treating an ALPR alert as an investigative lead, not evidence of guilt, with human verification required before enforcement action.
- Establishing appropriate controls for historical searches, retention and deletion of information, including consideration of changes in technology-provider storage practices.
- Limiting access to trained, authorized personnel, and auditing searches and system access.
- Establishing clear rules for information sharing and maintaining accurate alert and hot-list information.
- Protecting lawful political, religious, journalistic, associational and other constitutionally protected activity from inappropriate monitoring or use.
- Providing meaningful processes for public concerns and complaints along with accountability for intentional misuse.

These are prospective standards under consideration and are not intended to suggest that agencies have violated requirements that did not previously exist. The objective is to establish clear expectations as technology, capabilities, law and public understanding evolve.

Most importantly, accountability must have consequences.

Unauthorized searches, intentional misuse, improper monitoring, falsification of records, inappropriate information sharing, discriminatory use and other serious violations should result in prompt investigation and meaningful discipline. Where misconduct is serious or intentional, termination should be an available and appropriate consequence when warranted by the facts and applicable law or policy.

Accountability should also extend to supervisors and agency leadership when they knowingly permit serious misuse, disregard required safeguards, fail to act after discovering violations or otherwise contribute to misconduct.

Public confidence requires more than assurances of responsible use. Policies and systems should make misuse identifiable and attributable through access records, search histories, supervisory review and audits.

Constitutional Rights and Public Confidence

ALPR technology must not become a tool for monitoring people who are engaged in lawful activity. At the same time, ALPR cameras serve legitimate public safety purposes in a variety of locations.

Effective law enforcement and the protection of individual liberty are not competing missions; both are fundamental responsibilities of professional law enforcement.

“Tennessee’s police chiefs support the responsible use of technology that helps protect our communities while maintaining our commitment to constitutional policing,” said Sharry Dedman-Beard, Executive Director of the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police. “Public confidence requires clear rules, professional oversight, meaningful audits, and consequences when those rules are violated.”

Path Forward

The goal is responsible use — not unrestricted use and not prohibition.

Departments must retain the ability to use ALPR technology for its core public safety purposes, but the power to collect and access this information must come with clear limits, meaningful oversight, verifiable safeguards and real consequences for those who abuse it.

About the Tennessee Sheriffs' Association

The Tennessee Sheriffs' Association represents and supports Tennessee's 95 elected sheriffs and their offices through training, education, legislative advocacy, technical assistance and programs designed to strengthen the Office of Sheriff and enhance public safety throughout Tennessee.

About the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police

The Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police represents law-enforcement executives and agencies across Tennessee and works to advance professional policing through leadership, training, education, legislative advocacy, professional standards and the exchange of best practices. The Association supports Tennessee's police chiefs and law-enforcement leaders in strengthening their agencies, serving their communities and promoting effective, accountable and professional law enforcement throughout the state.

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