

**Santa Clara County Office of the Sheriff
Fixed Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR)
Flock Safety Technology-City of Saratoga
Annual Surveillance Report
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023**

1. DESCRIPTION OF TECHNOLOGY

Fixed automated license plate readers (ALPRs) use high speed cameras to photograph vehicle license plates. Eight Flock Safety ALPRs were leased and installed by the City of Saratoga during this reporting period. The Sheriff’s Office, consistent with a current law enforcement agreement, serves as the police department for the City of Saratoga and manages the utilization of the Flock Safety ALPRs.

Usage of the fixed ALPRs is for authorized law enforcement and public safety purposes as set forth in the Surveillance Use Policy. The City of Saratoga’s fixed ALPRs were used to collect license plate information from vehicles on public roadways and purged after 30 days unless the license plate was associated to a specific crime.

The Flock Safety technology consists of two main components, which are the hardware and its related software. The hardware involves a system of fixed, stationary cameras, strategically positioned throughout the City in order to capture license plates of vehicles wanted in connection with crime or missing persons, as determined through interface with state and national law enforcement stolen vehicle and missing person telecommunication systems. The cameras are affixed to existing infrastructure, connect to the software using an embedded cellular connection, have night vision capability, and can capture a license plate up to 50 feet away. In addition to generating notifications for wanted license plates, these cameras collect geographical locations, dates, and times related to the image captured.

The Flock Safety software interface allows users to create customized lists in order to alert the Sheriff’s Office of vehicles associated to crime. When a camera captures a wanted plate, otherwise referred to as “a hit”, the Flock Safety system generates a notification. The notification alerts both deputies and dispatchers to the presence of the wanted license plate at a certain location, or the location of the camera that captured the plate. Individual users may opt to receive those notifications in variety of ways. They may receive Flock Safety pop-ups, if logged into the software on patrol car computer terminals, or they may receive an email or text notification. Additionally, all deputies on patrol will receive notification via dispatch broadcast.

2. DATA SHARING WITH OUTSIDE ENTITIES

Consistent with the Board-approved Surveillance Use Policy and Agreement with the City of Saratoga, the Sheriff's Office ALPR data was shared with law enforcement organizations who requested assistance.

During this reporting period, the Sheriff's Office shared data with Atherton Police Department, California Highway Patrol, Hillsborough Police Department, Los Altos Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, Los Gatos Police Department, Palo Alto Police Department, San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, and Ventura County Sheriff's Office. The data shared with each agency was for the purpose of an active, specific investigation. With exception of the aforementioned law enforcement agencies, the Sheriff's Office did not share data with any other organization, including ICE - SB 54 California Values Act ensures no state and local resources are used to assist federal immigration enforcement.

Privacy concerns remain a high priority with the use of this system and controls are in place to ensure that the data is only used and shared pursuant to legitimate law enforcement and public safety needs.

3. COMMUNITY COMPLAINTS OR CONCERNS

Any community complaint regarding the use of the ALPRs is routed to Internal Affairs for tracking and response.

During this reporting period, there were no community complaints or concerns expressed to the Sheriff's Office regarding the fixed ALPR technology being utilized within the City of Saratoga.

4. NON-PRIVILEGED INTERNAL AUDITS / POLICY VIOLATIONS

All Sheriff's Office staff authorized to use the fixed ALPRs were provided with the Sheriff's Office and City of Saratoga's Surveillance Use Policies. Policies were reviewed with each authorized user prior to use of the system. Internal audits were conducted to ensure compliance with those policies, and no misconduct or misuse of the equipment or Surveillance Use Policy violations were discovered.

There is no evidence to suggest that the technology was used with disproportionate affect to lower-income community members or community members of color.

5. EFFECTIVENESS IN ACHIEVING PURPOSE

The fixed automated license plate reader technology is meant to alert law enforcement of stolen vehicles, stolen license plates, vehicles associated with crime, vehicles involving missing persons, and vehicles associated to Amber Alerts.

Flock Safety system captured the following:

Saratoga Hits Summary	
Type	Total
Lost or Stolen License Plates	7,201
Stolen Vehicle	211
Missing Person	1
Felony Vehicle	35

Though the system captured 7,201 lost or stolen license plates, many were likely duplicate notifications from the same camera. For example, a camera may quickly photograph a license and produce multiple record for the same plate. There were also multiple misreads (where the optical recognition incorrectly translates the license image

to alphanumeric characters) and hits on license plates which actually belonged to the vehicle. In other instances, deputies were simply unable to locate the vehicle. In total, 17 events resulted in the recovery or seizure of wanted or stolen vehicles and lost or stolen license plates. 15 notifications resulted in the arrest of 17 suspects for charges related to armed robbery, attempted carjacking, auto theft, hit and run, identity theft, mail theft, reckless evading, shoplifting, possession of stolen property, misappropriated property, burglary tools, a stun gun, controlled substances, and drug paraphernalia. Eight warrants were also served pursuant to those arrests, meaning these criminals were wanted in connection to other crimes

Two notable arrests occurred in a single day on May 2, 2023. One of those two events involved deputies locating a stolen vehicle and initiating a pursuit until the suspect disabled the vehicle, upon which, the suspect fled on foot, ran across the freeway, and jumped fences. Despite all that, deputies caught up to the suspect, who resisted, but was ultimately arrested. The suspect was in possession of a controlled substance and drug paraphernalia, had three outstanding warrants, and violated supervised release terms.

Also on May 2, 2023, the fixed ALPR cameras alerted deputies to a vehicle with stolen license plates. Similar to events transpiring earlier the same day, the vehicle was located, an enforcement stop initiated, and the suspect driver recklessly evaded until disabling the vehicle. The suspect then abandoned the vehicle, fled on foot, and attempted to carjack nearby motorists but was unsuccessful. Deputies did not give up, gave chase and one deputy cornered the suspect. A struggle ensued and the suspect grabbed for the deputy's gun, racking a round out of the gun. The suspect was eventually detained and arrested. The suspect was in possession of numerous articles of stolen property and burglary tools, including mail, bank statements, drivers licenses, a social security card, a passport, a laptop, a card reader, shaved keys, and checks, some of which were counterfeit.

Even if an arrest was not made as a result of an ALPR notification, the technology still proved useful in the recovery of stolen property. An example of this occurred on February 15, 2023, when a hit was received for a vehicle with two stolen license plates. Deputies located the vehicle, initiated an enforcement stop, but the suspect driver did not yield and recklessly evaded. The vehicle was found abandoned a short time later, a K9 unit was utilized, and the suspect's scent was tracked to a nearby school. While deputies were unable to locate the suspect(s), deputies recovered numerous articles of stolen property, including license plates, a disabled placard, mail, mail keys, and credit cards.

The ALPR cameras are not only useful in alerting to stolen license plates and vehicles in Saratoga but have also been vital in providing investigative leads. In February of 2023, an unknown suspect entered a bank in the City's downtown district and showed a teller a message on the suspect's phone demanding money and stating he had a gun. The suspect ultimately fled the scene without any money, but having fled by vehicle, deputies were able to identify the vehicle and determine its distinct characteristics with the assistance of the ALPR cameras, and then used that information to create and broadcast a wanted bulletin, or a BOL (Be-On-the-Lookout). Through these efforts, the suspect was identified, located, and arrested.

The technology has proven effective in producing investigative leads for detectives as well, leading to the identification of outstanding suspects and the ascertainment of specific crime trends affecting the City, providing law enforcement with the situational awareness necessary to effectively patrol for crime.

Based on all of this data, and the outcomes of the ALPR notifications, the technology was effective in the purpose of locating wanted vehicles and mitigating crime.

Database Searches

For this reporting period, the fixed ALPR system was searched a total of 7,049 times, however, many were duplicative, or related to the same crime, whereby one or more deputies ran potential license plate or vehicle description information in a variety of ways, or different combinations and permutations.

40 searches were associated to the auditing of the system to ensure compliance with surveillance use policies. 61 searches were associated to training deputies. 372 inquiries were made in proactive efforts with information received from outside law enforcement agencies.

6. PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS

The Sheriff's Office has a process in place to track public records requests, with staff designated to receive and respond to each request. The Sheriff's Office did not receive

any public records requests regarding the ALPR equipment, nor for any images or data captured by the fixed cameras.

7. ANNUAL COSTS

All costs associated to the lease and maintenance of the fixed ALPRs, to include storage and access of data, are incurred by the City of Saratoga pursuant to the previously approved Board Agreement. Any cost that may be incurred by the Sheriff's Office is reimbursed by the City.