

Frequently Asked Questions

Smart Streetlights / Automated License Plate Recognition Technology

The San Diego Police Department uses certain technologies to conduct investigations, enhance response to critical incidents and public threats and safeguard the lives of community members that must comply with the City of San Diego's Surveillance Ordinance.

These are some of the frequently asked questions related to Smart Streetlights and Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) technologies.

More on SDPD technologies can be found online at sandiego.gov/police/technology.

Where will the Smart Streetlights and ALPR be placed and how were the locations selected?

Smart Streetlights and ALPR will be placed in areas throughout the City of San Diego. The locations were decided based on factors including feedback from Commanding Officers and Centralized investigative units, crime data, ingress and egress points for criminal activity, and main thoroughfares. SDPD also attempted not to identify any locations near medical centers or houses of worship. [View the list of proposed locations.](#)

How many Smart Streetlights and ALPR will San Diego have?

The initial proposal is for 500 Smart Streetlights and ALPR. The Department will continue to evaluate the need for additional locations as the program develops.

How long will video and ALPR data be kept?

All video footage not being used for investigative purposes will be deleted and inaccessible after 15 days.

ALPR data not being used for investigative purposes will be deleted and inaccessible after 30 days.

Any footage or data use for investigative purposes will be securely retained following SDPD evidentiary requirements.

Will the cameras film areas on private property?

Any areas deemed to be private are digitally masked and completely blocked from view. The portion of the video behind the mask is not recorded and cannot be accessed.

What information is provided by the ALPR?

The ALPR can only determine the plate, make, model, and color of the vehicle.

It does not provide vehicle registration information nor provide any demographic data (race, age, religion, sex) of the driver. Investigators would need to search the car information in a separate database to obtain that information.

It is not connected to any third-party databases such as Carfax or the DMV.

Who will have access to view the video and ALPR data?

Not all SDPD officers and units will have access to the data. Access will be limited to personnel authorized by the Chief of Police who have been trained in the system's proper operation, associated legal issues, and requirements to respect privacy rights.

The Department will not proactively monitor the Smart Streetlights camera feeds.

How will SDPD ensure the system is not being misused?

A log will be maintained that records when access to the information is requested. This shall include the date, time, data record accessed, and staff member involved.

The log will be available for presentation for all required internal and external audits, and oversight will be maintained by the program manager.

Any misuse of this technology will result in discipline outlined in Department Procedures.

Does this technology contain facial recognition?

Facial recognition is not used with this technology.

Can this technology record audio?

Yes, however, audio is not recorded with this technology as per the terms of the contract.

Will the data be provided to other agencies to use for immigration purposes?

No. SDPD's use of this technology will comply with Senate Bill 54, which focuses on law enforcement sharing of data, and Senate Bill 34, governing the use of data from ALPR.

What happened to the Smart Streetlights the City used to have?

The original Smart Streetlights were deactivated in 2020 and not maintained. New cameras and software will need to be installed.