

# About Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPR)

## The Problem: Violent Crime Is Not Going Away

Nationwide, cities are experiencing a disturbing rise in homicides and violence. The FBI's 2020 Crime Report shows a 30% increase in homicides from 2019 to 2020, the largest single-year increase recorded.

Over two-thirds of the country's most populous cities saw [even more homicides](#) in 2021.

## One Solution: Technology that Detects Objective Evidence to Clear More Cases

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) capture computer-readable images of license plates and vehicles, allowing officers to compare plate numbers against those of stolen cars or wanted individuals on a crime database like the NCIC.

ALPR devices assist law enforcement in solving crime in two ways:

- Proactive - ALPR devices provide real-time alerts when a vehicle that is stolen or associated with a known suspect is detected.
- Investigative - ALPR cameras help determine whether and which vehicle(s) were at the scene of a crime.

## Is ALPR effective ?

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, when employed ethically and objectively, ALPRs are an effective tool for law enforcement, cutting down on the time required for investigations and acting as a force multiplier. In 2011, a study by the Police Executive Research Forum concluded that ALPRs used by the Mesa, Ariz., Police Department resulted in "nearly 3 times as many 'hits' for stolen vehicles, and twice as many vehicle recoveries."

Communities with ALPR systems report crime reductions of up to 70 percent. In some areas, that included a 60 percent reduction in non-residential burglaries, 80 percent reduction in residential burglary, and a 40 percent reduction in robberies.

## ALPR Provides Objective Evidence While Protecting Privacy

ALPR does not include facial recognition capabilities and does not capture personally identifiable information (PII). While eyewitnesses and individual officers are subject to inherent human bias, ALPR cameras capture wholly-objective images of vehicles and license plates, providing a clear and actionable investigative lead.

### ALPR Use Cases Include:

- **AMBER Alerts:** License plate readers in metro Atlanta were able to find a vehicle containing a kidnapped one-year-old, who had been taken from his mother at random off the street. The child was recovered unharmed. Some ALPR systems integrate directly with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's AMBER Alert system, sending real-time alerts to officers in seconds. [[New information released about 1-year-old's kidnapping](#)]
- **Silver Alerts:** Knoxville Police were able to locate a missing elderly man who suffers from dementia after he drove away in a family vehicle. ALPR technology has helped solve hundreds of Silver Alerts across the country. [[Missing man with dementia found using Flock camera](#)]
- **Firearm violence:** The Las Vegas Trail, a high-crime area in Fort Worth, TX, saw violent crime decrease by 22% in 2021 compared with the first nine months of 2019. Fort Worth Police attributed this drop partially to the license plate reader system implemented in the neighborhood during the same period of time. [[Crime is down 22% in Fort Worth's Las Vegas Trail. How neighbors and police made it safer](#)]
- **Organized theft:** Grafton, a growing village with a bustling retail district, is dealing with increased organized retail theft – Two-thirds of all the crimes reported to Grafton police in 2020 were retail thefts. Grafton Police have implemented a license plate reader system to identify vehicles that have been involved in thefts or have been stolen themselves. In one week alone, they recovered three stolen vehicles with drivers planning to engage in retail theft. [[Losses mount as retailers fight theft rings, accuse online storefronts of doing little to stop resale of stolen goods](#)]