Lewisville Police Department
Training Bulletin
08-03

Date: May 7, 2008
Subject: Plate Scan

Background

Patrol units 4115 and 4131 have been outfitted with a four camera license plate scanner system. The system reads license plates and stores the plate number, date, time and GPS coordinates of the squad cars position at the time the plate was read. The plate number is then compared to a "hot list" that is down loaded when the squad car is at the police department. The system does not run plates through TLETS. The stolen vehicle hotlist comes from DPS hourly. At a later date, we may add hotlist for Lewisville Municipal Warrants, LPD Felony Warrants and Registered Sex Offenders.

Purpose

The purpose of this training bulletin is to provide officers guidance on the use of the Plate Scan license plate readers on units 4131 and 4115. Officers are encouraged to read the users guide placed in both vehicles and available on the share drive at S:\Police\Platescan Manual.pdf.

Procedure

The Plate Scan system automatically moves the necessary files from the car to the server and from the server to the car without officer input. The plates, photographs and coordinates are transferred to the server from the car and the latest hot list is transferred from the server to the car's laptop computer. To begin using Plate Scan click the Start of Watch button at the bottom left of the screen. A program called Talon will run along with Plate Scan. Do not close Talon. It should be minimized to your task bar.

When an officer hops into a car that has all equipment powered down everything will be seamless. By starting the vehicle for the first time the rear PC will be powered on. When the officer turns on his or her toughbook the Plate Scan application will start automatically once booted in to Windows. At this time when Plate Scan is fully launched you will be able to use the application by selecting "Start of Watch".
The key here is that this application is dependent upon the rear computer being up and running. This rear computer's power timer is set to 30 minutes. If an officer is out of the vehicle (turns vehicle ignition off) for more than this 30 minute time frame the Plate Scan application will receive a "critical error: not connected" as the rear PC has shut down. You should leave this "critical error" message up and then power the vehicle on again, once the rear computer boots up again the application will reconnect itself and the error message will go away or at the very least reflect the fact you are "connected" once again and you can then address the message.

If an officer plans on leaving the vehicle for lunch or shift change etc., I would recommend a standard procedure of closing the Plate Scan application. Once returning to the car and powering on the vehicle, the user should wait two or three minutes before launching the application again.

The major parts are labeled, and will be explained below.

A. This is the overview image. It will provide a picture of the license plate, along with the car. Clicking on this will provide you with an enlarged view of the image, click on the image again to go back to the main interface.

B. This is the recognition image, this is the picture that the actual license plate recognition happens from. Clicking on this will provide you with an enlarged view of the image, click on the image again to go back to the main interface.

C. This is the recognition field, this is what the system read from the recognition image.

D. This is the Plate Log, it will display all the plates read for that shift, clicking on a specific plate will bring up the appropriate overview and recognition image.
When a license plate is matched to a database (hotlist), an alert screen will take over the computer screen and verbally alert the user.

The Mini button, top center, will minimize the program. You may run the Plate Scan program minimized the entire time. If an alert for a database match was to happen, that alert would take control of the screen, along with a verbal alert to notify the user.

The I.R. and Video buttons below the Camera display will give you a live feed of the cameras either in color or infrared. The use of the I.R. and Video functions will put additional stress on the CPU. You should operate the system in the PIC mode except in rare occasions when it is necessary to view live video.

The bottom row of soft buttons begins with Exit. This will exit Plate Scan. A confirmation box “Exit Application” is displayed following Exit. It will ask you to “Save Plates from your shift?” You should never select yes. This function is completed automatically without user input. You should select No to exit Plate Scan or Cancel to return to Plate Scan.

The next soft button to the right of Exit is Manual Entry. It allows the user to type in a license plate by hand to check that license plate against the Hotlist.

Search Logs allows you to search license plates that the system has previously read. The user may either search for a specific plate or use “*” as a wild character. Thus, searches of partial plates are possible.

Alarm log allows a search of previous alerts during the current shift.

Digital Recorder is not an option the Lewisville system is set up to use.

The Plate Scan button allows the user to manipulate the number of cameras displayed on the main interface. Cameras do not need to be displayed on the screen to capture license plates. They still capture license plates and compare them to the Hotlist. A match takes over the computer screen with an alert.

Anytime the user is asked to input data from a keyboard, the system will display a soft-keyboard on the screen. Data may be entered either by the soft-keyboard or the computers keyboard. The soft-keyboard screen display will go away once enter is entered on either the soft-keyboard or the computer keyboard.
Alerts

Anytime a license plate is read and matches a plate in a hotlist, you will get a full screen alert that will take over the screen until the “Acknowledge” button is clicked. Additionally, a verbal alert is also announced. The verbal alert will identify first the hotlist the plate matched and second the camera location which picked up the plate. An example would be, “Stolen Vehicle, Front Left.” The alert screen displays the overview image of the car along with the recognition image and recognition text for that image.

***Remember, the safe operation of your squad car is far more important than the operation of the Plate Scan system or locating a vehicle the Plate Scan system alerts on.***

To exit the alert screen press ACKNOWLEDGE. To exit the Plate Scan system at the end of the shift, press Exit and select No in the pop up screen asking if you wish to save plates from your shift. Remember, the plates are saved automatically.

HELPFUL HINT: Even if the Toughbook is not running the Plate Scan program. Plate Scan may still capture plates. After you log onto the laptop and the Plate Scan program begins, you will see a series of photos cycle through the Plate Scan screen. These images were captured and are now being processed into the laptops database.