

LICENSE PLATES

GEOPRIVACY VIDEO SERIES

[HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/469610867](https://vimeo.com/469610867)

SUMMARY

This video features a mock interview with a "repo man," or an employee for a vehicle repossession company, talking about his use of automated license plate reader (ALPR) technology. The interviewee discusses how the ALPR camera system on his "spotter car" continuously collects license plate data, along with location, time, date, and photographs of all cars along his daily driving routes. He notes that he specifically targets certain parking lots and apartment complexes, and his company sells all the license plate location data to police, banks, and insurance companies.

ACTIVITIES

Have students identify and map the locations of nearby surveillance cameras. Are any of these cameras potentially equipped with ALPR (based on appearance)? Where do these cameras appear to be concentrated? Consider this an example of counter-mapping.

Help your students file a FOIA request to determine if your town is purchasing or using ALPR technology. See the MuckRock project at:
<https://www.muckrock.com/assignment/is-your-town-using-alpr-technology-108/form/>

RELEVANT ARTICLES

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs). EFF.
<https://www.eff.org/pages/automated-license-plate-readers-alpr>

This Company Built a Private Surveillance Network. We Tracked Someone With It. Cox, J. 2019. Vice News.
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/ne879z/i-tracked-someone-with-license-plate-readers-drn>

Police License Plate Readers are Still Exposed on the Internet. Whittaker, Z. 2019. TechCrunch.
<https://techcrunch.com/2019/01/22/police-alpr-license-plate-readers-accessible-internet/>

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Does ALPR lead to uneven surveillance between groups? If so, which groups of people are more likely to be surveilled?
- Is it fair to target certain neighborhoods or parking lots with ALPR, as the "repo man" in this video claims to do?
- Should companies be legally allowed to collect license plate locations and pictures?
- Is it fair to use systematic location surveillance to fight fraud?
- The "repo man" in this video claims that using mobile ALPR cameras is just like walking down the street recording plates with a pen and paper. Is this a valid claim? Are there any differences between these practices?