



Public Information Office

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Joplin Police Statement Regarding Flock LPR Misuse Incident

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Investigation into Misuse of a Police Resource:

In December of 2025, the Joplin Police Department became aware of a possible policy violation by one of its personnel regarding the improper use of a departmental resource, specifically, the Flock license plate reader (LPR) system. An internal investigation was immediately initiated by the Joplin Police Department's Office of Internal Affairs. The officer under investigation was promptly placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of our internal investigation. The officer who was the subject of that investigation is no longer employed by the City of Joplin.

During that investigation, it was found that this single Joplin Police Officer did violate the policy regarding department equipment and systems. An audit of the Flock LPR system showed that no other policy violations were committed by any other Joplin Police personnel.

The internal investigation regarding the policy violation is ongoing and personnel records are not releasable by state law. However, as a matter of transparency and accountability, the Joplin Police Department has requested the Missouri State Highway Patrol conduct an independent investigation to determine if any criminal violations have occurred relating to this incident and the now former JPD officer.

Per City policy, the City of Joplin will not release nor confirm the name of the former employee or other details regarding personnel records. Likewise, per City policy, and to protect the innocent, the City of Joplin will not release nor confirm the name of individuals who were potential victims of the former employee.

How Joplin Police Are Preventing Such Misuse in the Future:

The Joplin Police Department is implementing additional measures to ensure there will be no further misuse of the Flock LPR system. Additional safeguards will include, but are not limited to, updating the current license plate reader policy governing license plate readers, monthly audits of the system and

individual users, and continued oversight of activities related to all license plate reader investigations by the Office of Internal Affairs.

Joplin Chief of Police Richard Pearson said, "The Joplin Police Department is committed to the fair and equitable treatment of all citizens, and we will never knowingly be involved with or tolerate any misuse of our authority or resources. Above all things, we value the sacred trust that has been placed in us by our community, and whenever there exists any threat to that trust, we take it extremely seriously and will investigate fully."

Any misuse of the Flock system or any other Joplin Police resource will not be tolerated, and discipline will be administered swiftly and in accordance with policy.

How Joplin Police Protects the Privacy of Those Not Charged with Criminal Conduct:

The Joplin Police Department and the City of Joplin understand concerns about privacy and work to protect the privacy of those not charged with criminal conduct. When the City is asked to produce open records about use of the Flock LPR system, we redact information about persons of interest being tracked, because they may not yet be charged with a crime, and we should protect the innocent from having their names or identifying information made public in association with criminal investigations until and unless they have been charged with a crime. Releasing such information could also jeopardize an open and active investigation.

How Flock LPR Systems Work:

License plate reading equipment is designed and used to locate vehicles associated with criminal activity only. License plate readers are designed to capture photos of vehicle license plates and other vehicle identifiers such as make, model, and color. The license plate readers are not designed to capture readily identifiable images of individuals or their faces and they do not use any type of facial recognition software. Additionally, license plate readers are not intended for remote or automated enforcement of traffic violations, and Joplin Police do not use them in that capacity.

Why Joplin Police Use the Flock LPR System:

The Joplin Police Department believes the Flock LPR system is a useful tool for keeping our community safe. Just since October of 2025, use of this system helped Joplin Police in the following example cases:

- Located a suspect in the rape of a juvenile. Probable cause was submitted for several felony charges.
- Located a juvenile who ran away from home and was found in California.
- Two juveniles who ran away from home were located in Florida and were able to be deemed safe.
- Located a suspect just 14 minutes after the suspect was reported, following an incident, to which the suspect later admitted to the commission of a crime. Probable cause was submitted for an aggravated felony sex offense.



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"Use of the Flock LPR system is the equivalent of having an officer standing on a street corner with a notebook, writing down license plates that go by, and reporting when vehicles pass by which we have good reason to be on the lookout for," said Chief Pearson.

The Joplin Police Department will continue to use the Flock LPR system and other technologies which assist us in fighting crime. These systems provide critical information to help us get dangerous wanted felons off the street, to get dangerous quantities of lethal illegal drugs such as fentanyl off the street, and can help us locate missing persons or persons of interest and suspects associated with serious crimes. Flock cameras are even useful in finding lost individuals such as Silver Alerts, or in assisting ex parte victims of domestic violence and stalking.

The Flock LPR system is helping Joplin Police keep our community safe, and provides the ability to resolve criminal investigations faster. The system is also used widely across the State of Missouri, by other cities, counties, and the Department of Public Safety. This same system is also used across the United States, and its use has been upheld in a variety of court decisions.

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Note to reporters: Chief Pearson may be available for comment on Monday, however, we will not be able to provide interviews or further comment over the weekend.

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