



CITY OF
THORNTON

Automatic License Plate Readers

February 3, 2026

Purpose

Update the City Council and Community of Thornton Police Department's Use of License Plate Reader Technology

Agenda

- *Background*
- *License Plate Reader Systems & Use*
- *Regulations, Policies and Procedures*
- *Key Community Concerns & Questions*
- *Public Safety Benefits*

Background

- *Catalyst for License Plate Reader (LPR) Technology in Colorado*
- *Evolution of Thornton's Use*

Catalyst for LPR Systems in Thornton & CO

- *Colorado ranks among the highest for auto thefts per capita*
- *In 2019, the State of Colorado offered a Colorado Auto Theft Prevention Grant that allowed the City of Thornton to purchase its first cameras*
- *Per Colorado Division of Public Safety, the rate of motor vehicle thefts in 2022 was at a rate of 785.7/ 100,000 residents compared to US rate of 282.7*
- *While LPRs continue to assist in vehicle theft enforcement, the tool has also been applied to other public safety needs*

Background

Colorado Auto Theft Numbers

Year	Motor Vehicle Theft Totals
2017	22,233
2018	22,659
2019	22,450
2020	31,530
2021	42,334
2022	47,243
2023	39,741
2024	30,424
2025	16,781

Thornton Auto Theft Numbers

Year	Motor Vehicle Theft Totals
2017	760
2018	800
2019	642
2020	961
2021	1,187
2022	1,205
2023	824
2024	724
2025	536

Data from CBI



Background

Leonardo

- *2019 – Present (\$1,000 per year)*
 - *MOU with the Colorado State Patrol*
 - *Colorado Auto Theft Prevention Authority Grant*
 - *4 Stationary Cameras*
 - *7 Mobile Cameras*



Flock Safety (\$48,500 per year)

- *2022 – Present*
 - *Federal JAG Grant*
 - *2022 - 10 Stationary Cameras*
 - *2024 - 5 Stationary Cameras added*
 - *2024 - 1 Portable Camera*



License Plate Reader Systems & Use

- *What is the full capacity of LPR/
Flock Technology*
- *Technology in use in Thornton*

LPR/ Flock Suite of Capability

Technology Capacity	Brief Description	In use in Thornton?
Photo Still Capture	Images that capture key physical description of vehicle and license plate	Yes
Video Capture	Ability to access and control video cameras owned or shared with outside agencies.	No
Facial Recognition Configuration	Ability to use photos or video to potentially identify suspects	No
Integration of feeds from private Flock Cameras	Ability to access data from private cameras in addition to public cameras (same type of cameras used by TPD)	Limited (2 Businesses with a total of 9 cameras)
Search and Alert Functionality	Ability to search database and get targeted alerts related to specific license plates	Yes
Gun Shot/ Sound Alerts	Ability to detect and send alerts of sounds like collision impact and gunshots	No
Targeted Information Sharing	Ability to grant access to law enforcement agencies upon request	Yes
Broad Information Sharing	Ability to grant access to all Flock users	No
Free-form / Flock Nova Search	Ability to search for vehicles or people using plain language	No

System Overview



21 Total Cameras

Maroon - Original 4 Leonardo

Green – Initial 10 Flock

Blue – 5 Additional Flock

Purple – 9 Private Cameras

System Overview

System Features

- *Basic Camera Functionality*
 - *Motion Triggered*
 - *Still Photo (No Video)*
- *What's Captured*
 - *Vehicle Overall*
 - *Camera Location*
- *Data Retention*
 - *30 Days*



Body, Make, Color

SUV-Toyota-Blue

Local Date/time captured

December 9, 2025, 11:59:08 AM MST

Organization name

Thornton CO PD

Device name

#01 E 136th Ave @ I-25 - EB

Alerts and Searches used in Thornton

- *Alerts function notifies Law Enforcement when a specific license plate enters our community near a camera*
 - *Hotlist*
 - *Colorado Crime Computer (Missing Persons, Individuals with warrants, Stolen Vehicles)*
 - *National Crime Computer (Missing Persons, Individuals with warrants, Stolen Vehicles)*
 - *Amber Alerts (License plates associated with missing children)*
 - *Custom Hotlist (Alerts created by investigators for specific investigations)*
- *Searches that can be conducted by Law Enforcement related to specific enforcement goal (precludes immigration and protective health care activities):*
 - *Specific Plate*
 - *Partial Plate*
 - *Generic Vehicle Descriptors*

Alert Examples

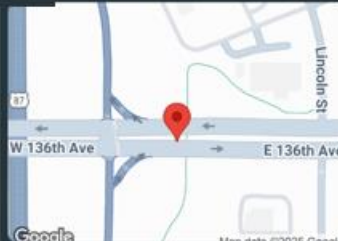

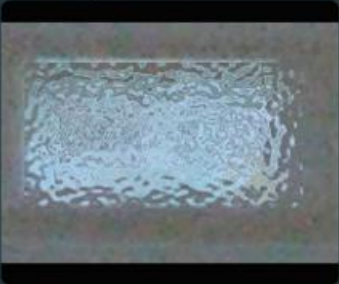
Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC) 12/10/2025 at 7:47:27 AM
8 minutes ago

Misdemeanor

Plate: CO DKH33

Source Entry Details: Not Provided

Device: #01 E 136th Ave @ I-25 - EB
Estimated Location: 50 E 136th Ave, Thornton, Colorado 80241, US



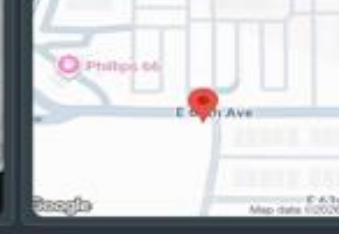

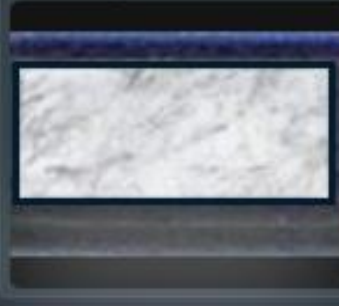
↑ 2 New Alerts 4 minutes ago

Misdemeanor

Plate: CO CUZL15

Source Entry Details: Not Provided

Device: #14 E 64th Ave @ Elm St - EB
Estimated Location: 4964 E 64th Ave, Commerce City, Colorado 80022, US



Search Examples

System Features

- *Search*
 - *Requires Offense Type*
 - *Case Number*
 - *Reason*
- *Leonardo*
 - *Requires Reason*
 - *Case Number*

The screenshot shows a search interface with a dark background. At the top, there is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon and a dropdown arrow, and a notification bell icon with the number '0'. Below this is a section titled 'Investigative Purpose' with a search icon. It contains two input fields: 'Offense Type *' with a dropdown arrow and the placeholder 'Enter offense type', and 'Case Number' with the placeholder 'Enter case number'. A red asterisk and the text '*Required Field' are positioned below the 'Offense Type' field. Below these is a 'Reason' section with a text input field containing the placeholder 'Enter search reason'. The next section is 'Vehicle Details' with a car icon. It features a 'License Plate' input field with the placeholder 'Enter license plate' and an information icon, and a 'Plate State' dropdown menu with the placeholder 'Any'. Below these are three checkboxes: 'Include Partial Matches', 'Nationwide Lookup', and 'CO Lookup', each with an information icon. At the bottom, there is a 'Vehicle Fingerprint' section with a text input field containing the placeholder 'Enter body, make, color, etc' and a dropdown arrow, and a filter icon.































Search Examples, Cont.

System Features

- *Search*
 - *License Plate Numbers*
 - *Partial Matches*
 - *Make, Body Style, Color*
 - *Identifiers*
 - *Top Rack*
 - *Back Rack*
 - *Bumper Stickers*
 - *Window Stickers*
 - *Tool Box*

The screenshot shows a dark-themed search interface. At the top, there is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon and a dropdown arrow, and a notification bell icon with the number '0'. Below this is a section titled 'Investigative Purpose' with a search icon. It contains several input fields: 'Offense Type *' (a dropdown menu with 'Enter offense type' and a dropdown arrow, marked as a required field), 'Case Number' (a text input field with 'Enter case number'), and 'Reason' (a text input field with 'Enter search reason'). Below these is a section titled 'Vehicle Details' with a car icon. It contains 'License Plate' (a text input field with 'Enter license plate' and an information icon), 'Plate State' (a dropdown menu with 'Any' and a dropdown arrow), and three checkboxes: 'Include Partial Matches', 'Nationwide Lookup', and 'CO Lookup' (with an information icon). At the bottom, there is a 'Vehicle Fingerprint' section with a text input field containing 'Enter body, make, color, etc' and a dropdown arrow, and a filter icon.

Search Example, Cont.

License Plate	Vehicle Description	Date / Time Captured	Device Name	Media	Actions
 CO BWUR29  Ford, Sedan, Black	12/12/2025, 5:46:14 AM	F#001 Colorado Blvd @ Hwy 52 SB	 2	 	
 CO BWUR29  Lexus, SUV, Black	12/12/2025, 5:41:30 AM	#02 Colorado @ Bella Rosa SB	 3	 	
 CO BWUR29  Toyota, SUV, Black	12/11/2025, 4:47:09 PM	#07 County Rd 13 @ Grant Ave - NB	 3	 	
 CO BWUR29  Toyota, SUV, Black	12/11/2025, 4:43:49 PM	#01 Colorado Blvd @ Fifth St - NB	 3	 	
 CO BWUR29  Toyota, SUV, Black	12/11/2025, 4:40:56 PM	F#011 Colorado Blvd @ Grandview Blvd NB	 3	 	
 CO BWUR29  Toyota, SUV, Black	12/11/2025, 4:38:47 PM	F#003 Colorado Blvd @ Summit Blvd NB	 3	 	

Vehicle descriptors can differ

System Overview

System Features

- *Searches connected to immigration enforcement or reproductive care will not run against our system.*

Search Filters

These filters are designed to remove your organization's devices from any search that appears to indicate that the search is connected to either immigration enforcement or reproductive care. The filter will apply to all searches performed that would include any of your networks, whether by users in your organization or other agencies you share with, such as via direct one-to-one sharing and the Statewide and Nationwide Lookup tools (if applicable).

Filter out Immigration searches

Enabled

Filter out Reproductive Care searches

Enabled

Targeted Access Sharing

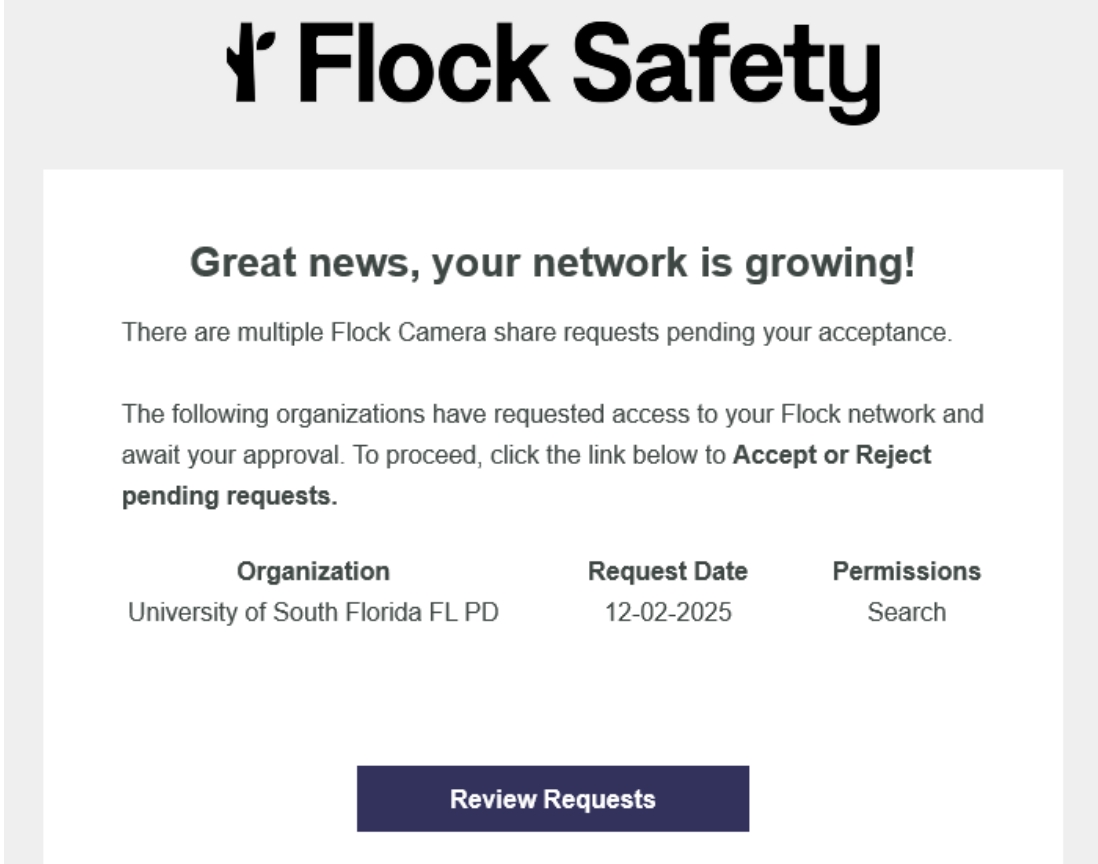
- Thornton's Flock network is visible nationwide, but requests to access the Thornton Police Department Flock data must be approved by a Thornton system administrator.
- The Thornton Police Department does not enable the auto approval of sharing requests.
- Federal agencies cannot request to access data with the Thornton Police Department.
- Four businesses and two HOAs share access to their data with the Thornton Police Department. Non-law enforcement entities cannot access law enforcement systems.

System Share Request Example

Thornton administrators are notified of system access requests by email.

Administrators must log into the system to approve the requests.

Even though requests can be approved by any system administrator, the requests are monitored by the primary system administrator designated by the Chief of Police.



Flock Safety

Great news, your network is growing!

There are multiple Flock Camera share requests pending your acceptance.

The following organizations have requested access to your Flock network and await your approval. To proceed, click the link below to **Accept or Reject pending requests**.

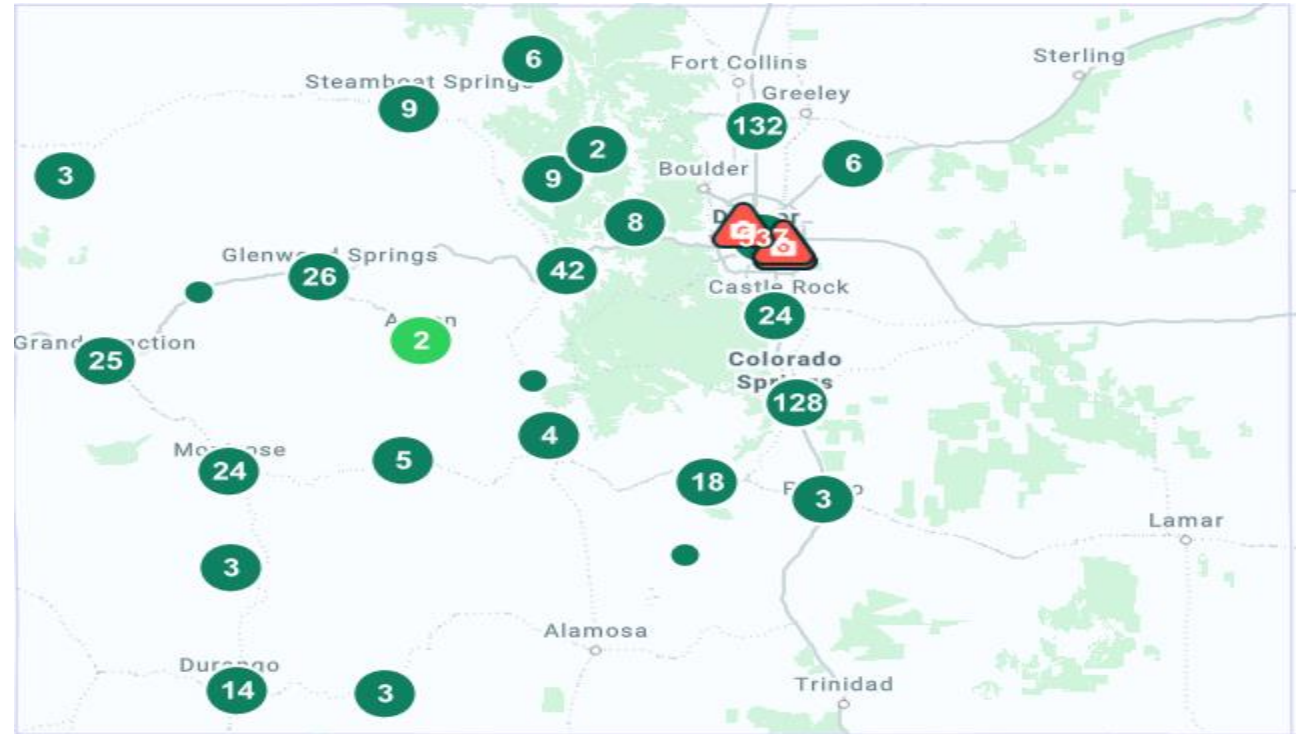
Organization	Request Date	Permissions
University of South Florida FL PD	12-02-2025	Search

[Review Requests](#)

Colorado Data Sharing

System Features

- *Network Sharing*
 - *Colorado Agencies*
 - 95
- *Leonardo*
 - *50 Colorado Agencies*

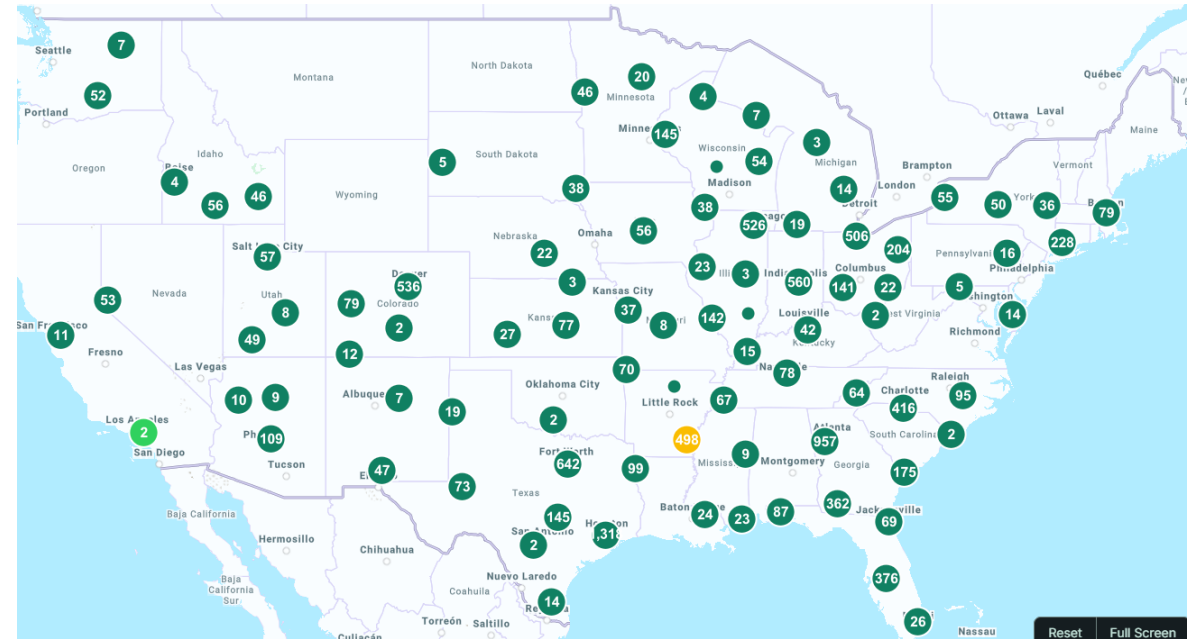


As of 01/08/2026

National Data Sharing

System Features

- Network Sharing
 - Agencies Outside of Colorado
 - 2189 (we have access to)
 - 1646 (have access to TPD)



As of 01/08/2026

License Plate Reader Regulations, Policies and Procedures to Protect Privacy

- *Colorado State Law*
- *Flock System Protections*
- *Thornton Internal Policies*
- *Thornton Internal Procedures*

State Regulations

Law Enforcement Technology

- *C.R.S. §§ 24-116-101 prohibits investigations into legally protected health-care activity (i.e., contraception, abortion, and gender-affirming medical care).*
- *C.R.S. § 24-74-103, et seq. prohibits enforcement of federal civil immigration law.*
- *SB 22-113 prohibits use of facial recognition in many circumstances (Thornton does not currently use facial recognition technology)*

Fourth Amendment Jurisprudence

Generally, there is no reasonable expectation of privacy for license plates on public streets

- *A person traveling in an automobile on public thoroughfares has no reasonable expectation of privacy in his movements from one place to another. United States v. Knotts, 460 U.S. 276, 281-282 (1983).*
- *No privacy interest exists in license plates because they are in plain view. United States v. Walraven, 892 F.2d 972, 974 (10th Cir. 1989).*
- *License plate check is not a search because license plates are "specifically intended to convey information about a vehicle to law enforcement authorities." U.S. v. Diaz-Castaneda, 494 F.3d 1146 (9th Cir. 2007).*

Judicial warrants are required when there is an expectation of privacy

- *There is a legitimate expectation of privacy, for Fourth Amendment purposes, in the record of people's physical movements as captured through cell-site location information. Carpenter v. United States, 585 U.S. 296 (2018).*
- *Attachment of Global-Positioning-System (GPS) tracking device to vehicle, and subsequent use of that device to monitor vehicle's movements on public streets, was search within meaning of Fourth Amendment due to trespass of police placing the device. United States v. Jones, 565 U.S. 400 (2012).*
- *Comprehensive daytime aerial surveillance violated Fourth Amendment. Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle v. Baltimore Police Department, 2 F.4th 330 (4th Cir. 2021).*

Flock cameras do not violate the Fourth Amendment

- *United States v. Martin*, 753 F.Supp.3d 454 (E.D. Virginia 2024) - Flock cameras are placed to capture images of locations, not individuals, that are known as historically high-traffic or high-crime areas. The three individual snapshots of the defendant's brief location at specific times hardly rise to the level of persistent, unceasing public surveillance that the courts found troublesome in *Carpenter and Beautiful Struggle*.
- *United States v. Jackson*, 2025 WL 1530574, p.8 (D. Kansas, 2025) - The amount of information currently obtained by the Flock System in Wichita is not the pervasive and continuous gathering of information with which the Supreme Court was concerned in *Carpenter and Jones* but rather is the limited sort of information that augments law enforcement's natural abilities in *Knotts*. Ultimately, the Constitution does not forbid the government from using technology to conduct lawful investigations more efficiently. Legislative bodies are far better equipped to regulate the use of surveillance systems like the Flock System through the legislative process of hearings and investigations.
- *Schmidt v. City of Norfolk*, 2:24CV621 (E.D. Virginia 01/27/2026) – City's ongoing operation of their 176 ALPR cameras, located in 75 clusters across the city does not constitute a search. p.31.
- *United States v. Sturdivant*, 786 F.Supp.3d 1098 (N.D. Ohio 2025) - ALPR data sits at the intersection of two reasonable-expectation-of-privacy doctrines. On the one hand, a car's license plate and exterior appearance belong to a category of vehicle-related identification in which an individual has no reasonable privacy interest. On the other hand, the ability to track drivers continuously and retroactively raises the specter of a surveillance state. *Id.* at 1107. In this case, the Flock query was not a search and thus did not violate the defendant's Fourth Amendment rights. *Id.* at 1111.

Thornton Policies LPR & Privacy

- *Department Policy*
 - *Used for official and legitimate law enforcement business.*
 - *No member shall operate license plate reader equipment or access its data without first completing department-approved training.*
 - *If practicable, officers should verify license plate reader responses through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation before taking enforcement action.*
 - *In the rare event that an image of a face may be incidentally captured, no license plate reader data will be used for facial recognition unless it meets the requirements of Colorado Senate Bill 22-113. (Thornton does not currently use facial recognition technology)*
 - *License plate reader audits should be conducted on a regular basis to verify proper use and compliance with department policy.*



Thornton Policies LPR & Privacy

- *Department Policy*

- *An employee designated by the Chief of Police will have administrative oversight of the system and remain informed on local, state and federal laws pertaining to the use of license plate reader systems.*
- *Searches of historical data within the system shall be done in accordance with department policies and procedures as they relate to accessing criminal justice information.*
- *All searches must include a reason for the search.*
- *Only evidence in a criminal or civil action will be retained beyond the 30-day retention period.*

System Access Roles

- *Administrators*

- *8 Total*
- *Add / Remove Users*
- *Request Network Sharing*
- *Approve / Revoke Network Sharing*
- *View Audit Logs*
- *View System Statistics*
- *Monitor Device Status*

- *General Users*

- *269 Total*
- *Conduct Searches*
- *Receive Hotlist Alerts*
- *Create Hotlist Alerts*

Privacy Protection and Safeguards

Audits

Organization

ID	Name	Networks	Time Frame	License Plate	Reason	Case #	Filters	Search Time
96a921bf-1c1c-4491-91b2-60ff2a6219c9		2751 Networks	January 5, 2026 8:00 PM January 7, 2026 8:00 PM		Larceny/Theft Offenses			January 7, 2026 7:46 PM
2136e7ce-d3c0-4983-9852-4ab176f5dc37		2675 Networks	December 8, 2025 12:00 AM January 7, 2026 7:44 PM		Motor Vehicle Theft/Stolen, Stolen Property Offenses - Misuse c8 plate			January 7, 2026 7:45 PM

National

ID	Name	Org Name	Networks	Devices	Time Frame	License Plate	Reason	Case #	Filters	Search Time
50f179ad-6221-4f16-a6d0-5a47e57920d5	***	Mount Morris Township PD MI	1846 Networks	36036 Devices	January 1, 2026 6:31 AM January 8, 2026 6:31 AM	***	Motor Vehicle Theft/Stolen		***	January 8, 2026 6 AM

Privacy Protection and Safeguards

Department Transparency Website (<https://www.thorntonpd.org/cameras>)

- *Why we use automated license plate reader cameras.*
- *How automated license plate reader cameras work.*
- *Link to our department policy*
- *Flock transparency portal*
 - *The number of cameras in use*
 - *Number of System Searches*
 - *Number of vehicles detected*
 - *List of agencies granted access to Thornton data*



Key Community Concerns & Questions

- *Security of cameras and databases*
- *Information sharing with federal agencies*
- *Information use by other agencies*
- *Technology use in enforcement decision making*
- *Fiscal accountability*
- *CORA/CCJRA requests*
- *Privacy*

Security of Cameras and Databases

Flock System Security

- *Highest Industry Requirements*
 - *AES-256-bit device encryption to secure data throughout its lifecycle*
 - *Data in transit is encrypted using TLS 1.2*
 - *Criminal Justice Information Services compliant (CJIS)*
 - *Data is only stored temporarily on a camera (no more than 7 days)*
 - *Multi-Factor Authentication*
 - *Individual Organizations Control Access To Their Data*
 - *Exporting of information is limited to evidence in a criminal or civil action*
 - *Data Security Claims*
 - *Reviewed by the City's IT Department*

Information Sharing With Federal Agencies

- Federal agencies cannot even request to access data with the Thornton Police Department.

Federal Sharing

Choose to receive 1:1 sharing requests from Federal organizations within the Sharing experience.

Receive Federal share requests

Disabled



Information Use by Other Agencies

- *Regularly audit for use that is contradictory to Colorado Law or Department Policy*
- *Searches connected to immigration enforcement or reproductive care will not run against our system*
- *System wide requirement to select a specific offense type*
- *Flock Transparency Portal*
- *Terms and Conditions*
 - *“Solely to facilitate gathering of evidence that could be used in a lawful criminal investigation”*

Technology Use in Enforcement Decision Making

- *Technology like Flock is designed to support officer decision-making, not replace the legal standards that must be met before taking enforcement action.*
- *Lead development in a criminal investigation is a primary use of the system.*
- *Officers are trained regarding the need to verify information before taking enforcement action.*
- *Any allegation of misuse of Thornton Police Department data, including Flock data, is subject to investigation and discipline if sustained. To date the Thornton Police Department has not had any allegations of misuse.*



Fiscal Accountability

- *Any investment in law enforcement technology is an investment in public safety.*
- *Every implementation is carefully considered and regularly reviewed to ensure public safety benefit.*
- *We strive to ensure taxpayer dollars are being used responsibly to keep our community safe.*
- *ALPR technology is a force multiplier that accelerates lead generation and investigative efforts, ultimately saving money and time by optimizing our valuable resources.*

CORA/CCJRA Requests

- *Records requests are reviewed by police and city attorney staff to ensure compliance with Colorado law.*
- *Releases are limited to audit logs*
 - *Redacted to protect the integrity of investigations*
 - *Officer Name*
 - *License Plate*
 - *Case Number*
 - *Filters (Vehicle Descriptions)*
- *Will not release any information that could jeopardize criminal investigations or the privacy and safety of citizens*

Privacy

- *Flock Nova “search once see everything” feature (like Free Form Search) is disabled.*
- *The Flock LPR technology used by the Thornton Police Department only captures a single, still photo of the back of a vehicle. It does not capture driver information (no video or audio is captured).*
- *The Thornton Police Department does not ingest live video feeds into our Flock system.*
- *Although this technology indicates which cameras were passed in the previous 30 days, use of the system and searches must be tied to a law enforcement investigation.*
- *The only real-time application of the system is the ability to alert on-duty officers that a vehicle on the hot list has entered our community.*
- *Flock + Ring partnership*

Public Safety Benefits

- *Proactive Crime Prevention*
- *Support Criminal Investigations*

System Statistics

System Features

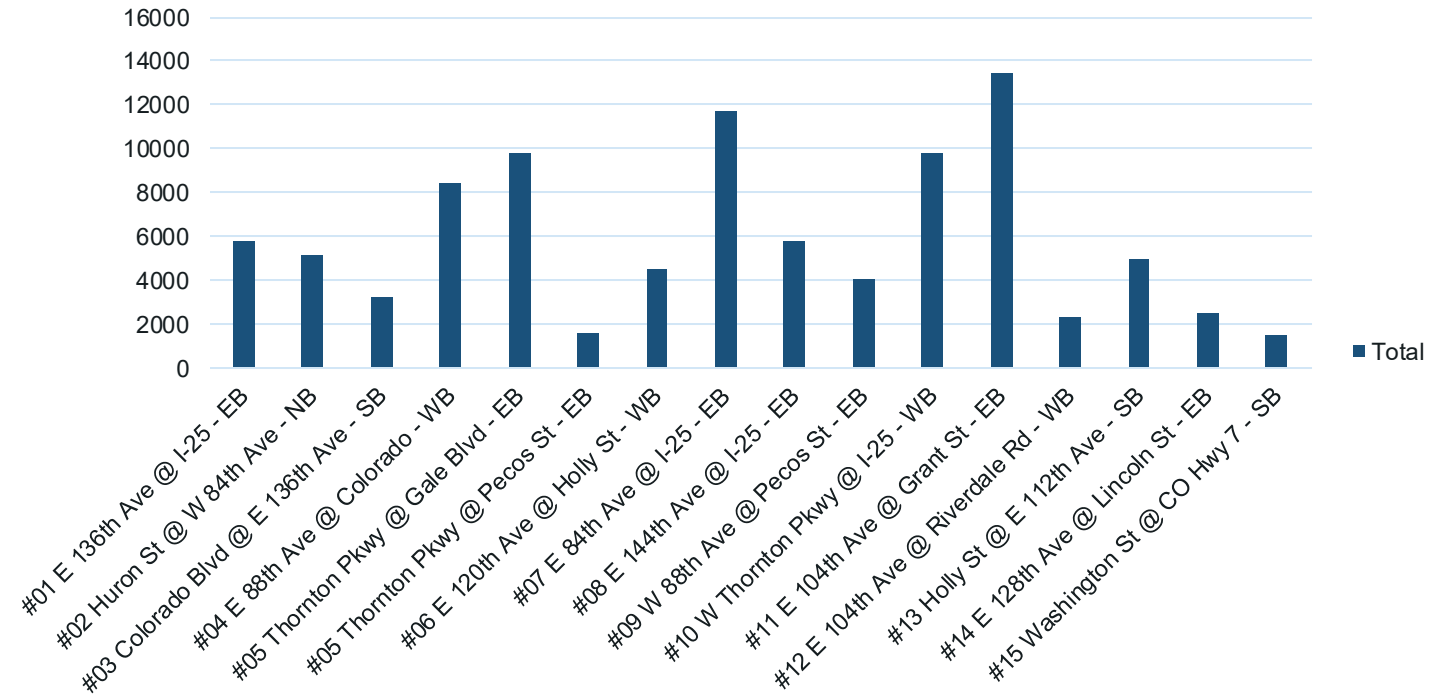
- *Insights*

- *Hotlist Hits*

- CCIC
- NCIC
- NCMEC Amber Alert
- Custom

- 94,436 (Total 2025)
- 259 Hits Per Day
- Leonardo 827 (Total 2025)

Total Hits 2025



System Statistics

System Features

- *Insights*
 - *Searches (30 days)*
 - *(Stored Indefinitely)*
 - *61 Leonardo searches all of 2025*

Search Type	#
Lookup	2539
Standard	1033
Visual	5
MultiGeo	1
Grand Total:	3578

Dec 1, 2025 – Dec 31, 2025

System Use Examples

Cases Referencing Automatic Plate Readers without an Arrest

LPR Type Referenced	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
ELSAG	0	0	3	2	0	1	2	8
FLOCK	1	0	0	1	42	238	260	542
LPR	27	68	56	76	44	25	15	311
Grand Total	28	68	56	77	83	251	267	830

Cases Referencing Automatic Plate Readers with an Arrest or Warrant Application

LPR Type Referenced	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
ELSAG	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
FLOCK	0	0	0	0	48	86	66	200
LPR	3	12	15	25	38	19	6	118
Grand Total	3	12	16	25	86	105	72	319

01/01/2019 to 11/19/2025

Successes

Homicide Investigations

Juvenile Kidnapping / Sexual Assault

Missing Adult with Dementia

Child Exploitation

Felony Menacing

Business Robbery

Strongarm Robbery

Nike Store \$5,700 Theft

Jewelry \$6,500 Theft

Burglary Ring



Successes

July 2024 (Ward 1) - The Thornton Police Department investigated a homicide involving a male who had been struck and killed by a vehicle in the area of 84th and Acoma. Witnesses provided a limited description of the vehicle as being a red Ford Expedition with gold trim. Investigators searched for the vehicle fingerprint on nearby Flock cameras and located a vehicle matching the description provided. The image had been captured by a Flock camera approximately 6 minutes prior to the initial call to dispatch. The Flock camera image also captured a license plate on the vehicle. With the license plate number, investigators were able to find an address associated to the vehicle. This further assisted in identifying the suspect who was arrested approximately eight hours after the incident was originally reported.

Successes

October 2024 (Ward 3) - Thornton officers responded to a report of a missing 89-year-old male with dementia. Officers learned the male had left in a family vehicle. The license plate was entered into the Colorado Crime Information Computer (CCIC) system. Officers then began receiving alerts as the vehicle was captured passing Flock cameras. The first alert was in Northglenn but officers were unable to locate the vehicle. A short time later, it passed a Flock camera in Thornton. Officers responded to that area and were able to find the male who advised officers he was lost and had been trying to find his way home. The male was safely returned to his family after only two hours.

Successes

August 2025 (Ward 3) - Following an attempted burglary at a local dispensary, Thornton investigators learned that there had been several similar burglaries at dispensaries throughout the metro area. The business had video that captured a suspect vehicle and its plate number. The vehicle had been stolen and its location was unknown. A search through Flock indicated the vehicle had passed a Thornton camera giving investigators a general area to start looking. Investigators were able to locate the vehicle which led to the identification of a residence where one suspect was living. A search warrant was obtained on the residence and evidence from the burglaries was located. Several suspects were identified and arrested.

Successes

September 2025 (Ward 1) - Thornton investigators learned that the defendant in a kidnapping and sexual assault of a juvenile female had removed his ankle monitor just days prior to the scheduled trial. The defendant removed his son from school that morning and fled to avoid prosecution. Investigators entered the license plate into the Colorado Crime Information Computer (CCIC) system. Later the same day, the defendant's license plate alerted on a Flock camera in Chafee County. Local officers responded to the area and located the vehicle. The defendant was taken into custody and returned for trial. His son was recovered unharmed.

Successes

April 2024 (Ward 1) – Officers investigated a robbery in which a suspect threatened employees with a knife. During the incident, the suspect also committed a sexual assault before fleeing and later robbing another business. Surveillance video showed the suspect’s vehicle with distinctive paint damage but no visible license plate. Using ALPR technology, investigators searched the vehicle fingerprint and found a vehicle with matching characteristics, leading to the identification and arrest of the suspect.

Questions?