

Humboldt County Sheriff's Office - Byrne JAG Local 2022 – ALPR Cameras

Humboldt County is located in Northwestern California and home to magnificent coastal redwoods, scenic coastal drives, quaint small towns, and beautiful state parks and beaches. It is a haven for those who love nature and outdoor recreation. Humboldt County is also known for growing cannabis, both permitted and otherwise. Cannabis destination tourism in the county is on the rise. It is estimated that over 500,000 visitors visit the area during the year.

There are approximately 136,000 citizens that live in Humboldt County. Over half of them live in unincorporated areas and rely on the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) as their primary law enforcement.

Being a rural touristic area, with a heterogeneous population, Humboldt's crime rates tend to be high. Based on the recently released 2021 Humboldt County Sheriff's Office Annual Report, violent crimes in the area have steadily increased. There has been a 43% increase in Homicide, 52% increase in rape, 20% increase in assaults, and an 15% increase in domestic violence incidence compared to 2020 statistics. Burglaries, stolen vehicles, and property crimes are also on the rise. So far in this current year, the numbers for violent and other crimes are similar to 2021 and are not trending to being reduced.

Humboldt County's suffering economy has led to decreased tax revenue at time when there are increased demands for law enforcement presence. The Coronavirus pandemic continues to greatly impact local budgets. The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office is low on resources and short staffed. There is a significant need for additional resources, like JAG funding, to help the HSCO adequately serve Humboldt's population.

With this year's solicitation, the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office would focus primarily on the BJA area of emphasis of "Reducing Violent Crime".

The Sheriff's Office is looking to technological advancements as a way to assist in reducing violent and other crimes in in the county. The HCSO has identified an opportunity to reduce these crimes by utilizing the technology of fixed automated license plate reading (ALPR) cameras. The Sheriff's Office currently has ALPR technology on two patrol vehicles. The fixed ALPR will enhance our ability to solve violent crime in the rural areas of our county. The choice to go with the ALPR cameras is based on the fact that 7 out of 10 crimes are committed with the use of a vehicle. The cameras can be the eyes of the Sheriff's Office and can help neighborhoods, communities, and law enforcement work together to combat the growing crime rate.

ALPR cameras strategically placed throughout the county can help law enforcement investigate crime by providing objective evidence — license plates and vehicle characteristics. The cameras send a real-time alert to law enforcement when a stolen vehicle or known wanted suspect from a state or national crime database enters the jurisdiction. The ALPR cameras allow law enforcement agencies to compare plate numbers against those of stolen cars or cars driven by people suspected of being involved in criminal or terrorist activities. They can also send alerts if a vehicle associated with a missing person in an AMBER or Silver Alert is detected.

Cameras such as these are in use in over 2,000 cities across 40 states, and the manufacturing companies work with thousands of law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement agencies have reported crime reductions of up to 70% when deploying ALPR cameras in their communities.

This technology would proactively help prevent and reduce crime from occurring in the county's jurisdiction.