

Flock FAQ

Q: What is Flock?

A: Flock Safety ALPR cameras help law enforcement investigate crime by providing objective evidence, including license plates and vehicle characteristics. The cameras send real-time alerts when they photograph a license plate associated with a stolen vehicle, kidnapping, homicide, robbery or other serious crime. Flock Safety also alerts if a vehicle associated with a missing person or AMBER or Silver Alert is detected. The cameras are used to solve and reduce property and violent crime and are not intended for minor traffic or parking violations. Only peace officers and public safety personnel have access to the Harris County data.

Flock license plate readers are motion-activated cameras paired with cloud-based software built specifically for public safety and security. Unlike traditional security cameras that record continuous video, Flock cameras focus on capturing specific vehicle information:

- License plate number
- Vehicle make, model, color, and body type
- Date, time, and general location of detection

Flock cameras are placed at common vehicle access points such as neighborhood entrances and parking lot exits, keeping data collection limited to information relevant to public safety.

Flock cameras are used by:

- Businesses and property managers
- Cities, towns and counties
- Neighborhoods and Homeowners Associations
- Public safety agencies
- Schools and college campuses

Clients maintain full control over camera usage, access permissions, and data retention.

Q: How Do Flock Cameras Work?

A: Flock cameras capture vehicle information as they pass. This information is then stored securely, allowing authorized users to search the data or receive alerts concerning safety incidents.

Vehicle Capture: Flock cameras are designed to capture an image focused solely on the vehicle when it passes by.

License Plate Recognition: Flock uses advanced computer vision and License Plate Recognition (LPR) technology to analyze images from its cameras. The system identifies key vehicle characteristics (make, model, color, body type) and accurately reads the license plate, converting the visual data into searchable digital text. Together, these features create comprehensive records that serve as a powerful tool for law enforcement and community safety.

Secure Cloud Storage: The information is encrypted and securely stored in Flock's cloud platform. Only authorized users with proper permissions can access it.

Alerts and Searches: Authorized users can search for vehicles using license plate numbers or vehicle attributes. They can also receive alerts when a specific vehicle of interest is detected, such as a stolen vehicle.

Automatic Data Deletion: Data collected by Flock cameras administered by the Harris County Sheriff's Office is deleted automatically after 30 days, unless the data is required for an ongoing investigation.

Q: Does Flock use facial recognition?

A: No. Flock does not use facial recognition technology.

Flock's ALPR solution focuses solely on vehicles and license plates, not people. It does not identify individuals, analyze faces, or utilize any form of biometric data.

Q: Is Flock surveillance?

A: Flock is not mass surveillance. It is a purpose-built tool focused on vehicle information related to safety incidents.

Flock cameras are placed in specific locations and used in response to defined safety needs. They are not designed to monitor people's daily activities or create permanent records of lawful behavior.

Q: Who can access data collected by Flock cameras administered by the Harris County Sheriff's Office?

A: Only authorized law enforcement personnel with approved access can view or search HCSO Flock camera data. All access is logged to promote accountability and responsible use. HCSO policy states that Flock data may only be accessed for criminal investigations. Any employee who misuses criminal justice information – including Flock data – in violation of policy is subject to discipline, including possible termination of employment.

Q: How many Flock cameras does the Harris County Sheriff's Office administer?

A: The Harris County Sheriff's Office manages 20 Flock networks with a combined total of 480 cameras. The owners of these networks are primarily municipal utility districts and county commissioners' offices who have designated HCSO as their system administrators.

Q: Has Flock helped improve public safety in Harris County?

A: Yes. There are many examples of HCSO deputies and detectives using Flock to locate and arrest violent fugitives before they could commit more crimes. Some recent examples:

- On May 26, 2026, Flock notified deputies when a stolen car passed a camera in Humble. A detective searched the area and spotted the vehicle in a nearby shopping center. The vehicle fled when deputies approached, leading deputies on a brief pursuit during which the stolen car struck multiple vehicles, including a marked patrol car. Three occupants then fled on foot but were captured as they attempted to escape into a nearby neighborhood. Deputies recovered two pistols from the suspects, including a gun that had been reported stolen during a recent car burglary. All three suspects were arrested and face multiple charges.
- On May 9, 2026, deputies used Flock to locate a vehicle involved in the abduction of two juveniles. The Flock system showed that the vehicle had traveled to Louisiana, where authorities from that state arrested the alleged abductor on felony charges and returned the two juveniles safely to Harris County.
- On March 3, 2026, detectives investigating a fatal hit-and-run car crash used vehicle images obtained from Flock to identify damage to the suspect's vehicle that wasn't there prior to the crash. This evidence was used to support charges against the driver.
- On Feb. 20, 2026, detectives investigating a fatal hit-and-run crash used Flock to identify and locate the suspect's vehicle while repairs were underway to conceal the damage from the crash, which had happened less than 40 hours earlier. The

Flock system's ability to help detectives quickly located the suspect vehicle made it possible to preserve critical evidence in the case.