

Questions Worth Asking About Santa Rosa PD's Flock Cameras

These questions are preparation for the event hosted by SRPD on September 17, 2026 at 6:00pm at 34 Stony Point Road. We will be handing out flyers with these questions. This page is provided for more context.

These questions are not specific to Santa Rosa PD and are suitable for all city leaders.

***NOTE:** The questions below that reference SRPD-specific data are sourced from Flock's own transparency portal. The links to the Flock Transparency Portal for other Sonoma Cities can be found on our site at <https://flock-truth.com/local>*

1. Will SRPD adopt Flock's new 7-day standard? If not, why does Santa Rosa need to retain vehicle-location data for 30 days?

Flock recently announced that it will reduce its standard retention period from 30 days to 7 days. (The ALCU is recommending no more than 48 hours of retention.) Flock says roughly 90% of searches already occur within seven days of collection.

But Flock also says individual agencies can maintain longer retention periods when required or permitted by local policy.

SRPD's transparency portal currently lists its retention period as **30 days**.

That means Flock's announcement does not automatically reduce the amount of time Santa Rosa retains the information.

The public can reasonably ask why 30 days remains necessary if Flock says most searches happen within seven days.

2. When Evidence Mode is used, exactly what information is preserved, for how long, and who decides what qualifies?

Flock says data associated with a case can be preserved rather than aging out after seven days.

The ACLU has raised an important question: does Evidence Mode preserve only information that investigators determine may actually be evidence in a specific case—or does simply searching information cause it to be preserved?

That distinction matters.

If only actual evidence is preserved, the change could meaningfully reduce unnecessary retention.

If a search can cause broad amounts of ALPR data to be preserved, the seven-day default could provide considerably less privacy protection than it appears to provide.

3. Of the over 700,000 unique vehicle detections reported by SRPD in the last 30 days, how many were connected to an actual criminal investigation?

As of 8/25/26, SRPD's Flock transparency portal reported **730,456 unique vehicle detections** during the previous 30 days.

Those detections aren't 730,456 suspects.

They represent vehicles captured by the system.

The important policy question is therefore not simply whether Flock has helped solve crimes. It is how much information about people who are not suspected of crimes must be collected to produce those results.

SRPD should be able to provide meaningful information about that tradeoff.

4. Of the 41,078 hotlist hits reported by SRPD in the last 30 days, how many were confirmed matches?

SRPD's portal reports **41,078 hotlist hits**. But an ALPR alert isn't necessarily proof that a vehicle is wanted. SRPD's policy recognizes this by requiring officers to verify an ALPR response before taking enforcement action based solely on an alert. So a raw “hit” number doesn't tell the public how accurate the system is.

A useful transparency report would show:

- total alerts;
- confirmed matches;
- false positives;
- outdated or invalid records; and
- enforcement actions resulting from confirmed matches.

5. How many outside law-enforcement agencies can access or search information collected by Santa Rosa's Flock cameras?

SRPD's transparency portal lists a very large network of law-enforcement organizations that are granted access to Santa Rosa data.

That changes the privacy question.

This isn't simply a system of cameras operated by Santa Rosa Police Department for Santa Rosa Police Department.

It is part of a broader network.

The public therefore needs to understand who can access information collected here and under what conditions.

6. When an officer from another agency accesses Santa Rosa's Flock data, are they required to follow SRPD's rules, their own agency's rules, or both?

SRPD's written ALPR policy contains specific requirements concerning authorized use, training, access, auditing and sharing.

For example, SRPD's policy says department members must complete department-approved training before accessing ALPR data and that ALPR information may only be accessed for legitimate law-enforcement purposes.

But an officer employed by another agency isn't an SRPD employee.

That creates an important question:

Which rules actually govern that officer's use of information collected by SRPD cameras?

7. If another agency uses Santa Rosa's Flock data in its own investigation, can that agency preserve the information after SRPD's normal retention period ends?

SRPD's policy says ALPR data should normally be purged after the applicable retention period unless it has become—or is reasonably expected to become—evidence or is subject to another lawful requirement.

That makes the identity of the agency conducting an investigation important.

Suppose a vehicle is captured in Santa Rosa on January 1.

SRPD's normal retention period eventually expires.

But an agency elsewhere searches the Flock network on January 20 and uses that information in an investigation.

Does the outside investigation allow the Santa Rosa data to be preserved?

If so, for how long?

And under whose retention policy?

Those are questions the public should be able to answer.

8. What prevents another agency with access to Santa Rosa's Flock data from using it for a purpose SRPD itself prohibits?

SRPD's Flock transparency portal specifically lists prohibited uses including immigration enforcement, harassment or intimidation, use based solely on protected class, and personal use.

But the Flock network contains agencies with different policies and different legal environments.

Flock has announced that local agencies will have more ability to restrict what other Flock customers can search their data for.

The ACLU has questioned whether these technical restrictions can reliably prevent improper searches, noting that previous search-purpose controls could be circumvented.

The important question is therefore not whether Flock has a policy.

It is: **What technical or administrative mechanism prevents an outside agency from violating Santa Rosa's restrictions?**

9. How many improper Flock searches has SRPD identified, investigated, or disciplined?

SRPD says system access is logged and its policy calls for regular audits.

Flock is also making its Audit Assistance system available across its customer base.

The ACLU has pointed out that the effectiveness of Flock's automated auditing system has not been independently evaluated.

The existence of an audit log is useful.

But the public should also know what the audits have actually found.

10. How many Flock searches actually produced useful investigative leads compared with the enormous amount of vehicle data collected?

As of 8/25/2026, SRPD's transparency portal currently reports:

- 145 cameras
- 730,456 unique vehicle detections in 30 days
- 968 searches
- 39,996 hotlist hits

The portal also provides examples of successful investigations involving Flock. Those successes are relevant. But they don't tell us the system's overall effectiveness. To evaluate a surveillance system honestly, the public needs both sides of the equation:

What did it collect, and what did that collection accomplish?

The question isn't whether Flock has ever helped solve a crime. It clearly has. The question is whether the investigative benefit justifies collecting and retaining information about hundreds of thousands of vehicles that aren't suspected of anything.

The big picture question

There is a bigger issue underneath all of these questions. If my vehicle is photographed in Sonoma County, whose rules protect that information?

- City policies matter.
- Flock's policies matter.
- The policies of other agencies with access matter.
- And the technical controls built into the Flock system matter.

These things aren't necessarily the same and the public deserves to understand how they fit together.