

WA Surveillance Watch Template

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

Law Enforcement Surveillance Camera Systems Request Template

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) & Video Surveillance

Washington State Public Records Act (RCW 42.56)

Date: [INSERT DATE]

To: [POLICE DEPARTMENT NAME]

Attention: Public Records Officer/Public Disclosure Unit

Address: [DEPARTMENT ADDRESS]

Email: [DEPARTMENT EMAIL]

Fax: [DEPARTMENT FAX if applicable]

From:

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR ADDRESS]

[YOUR EMAIL]

[YOUR PHONE NUMBER]

IMPORTANT RECENT LEGAL PRECEDENT

Skagit County Superior Court Ruling (November 2025):

Judge Elizabeth Yost Neidzwski of Skagit County Superior Court recently ruled that surveillance camera data, including images captured by Flock cameras, qualifies as public records subject to Washington's Public Records Act (RCW 42.56). This landmark decision came after the cities of Sedro Woolley and Stanwood attempted to block public records requests by arguing that releasing surveillance images would violate privacy.

Key Findings from the Court: - The judge found that the scope of surveillance was "so broad and indiscriminate" — with most images capturing people not suspected of any crime — that the data must be released under public records law - The ruling specifically stated: "The Flock data do qualify as public records subject to the Public Records Act" - This decision could affect dozens of Washington police departments using similar surveillance technology - Both cities involved in the lawsuit have since turned off their camera systems

Additional Context - Federal Access Concerns:

A University of Washington Center for Human Rights report (October 2025) revealed that federal agents, including U.S. Border Patrol and ICE, had accessed Washington's surveillance camera networks, potentially in violation of state law prohibiting use of such systems for

immigration enforcement. The report found: - At least eight Washington law enforcement agencies enabled direct data sharing with Border Patrol - At least ten agencies had “back door” access by Border Patrol without explicit authorization - Several agencies, including Auburn and Lakewood, stated they were unaware of this access and have since revoked it - Out-of-state law enforcement agencies conducted searches of Washington data, including searches related to abortion seekers

Why This Matters for Your Request:

This ruling establishes clear legal precedent that surveillance camera data collected by law enforcement in Washington State is subject to public disclosure under RCW 42.56. Agencies cannot claim privacy exemptions simply because the data includes images of individuals not suspected of crimes. This precedent strengthens your right to access this information and provides legal support if any agency attempts to deny your request on privacy grounds.

Source References: - *Rodriguez v. City of Sedro Woolley and City of Stanwood*, Skagit County Superior Court (November 7, 2025) - University of Washington Center for Human Rights Report: “Leaving the Door Wide Open: Flock Surveillance Systems Expose Washington Data to Immigration Enforcement” (October 2025) - News coverage: KING 5, Herald Net, and other regional outlets

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC RECORDS

Dear Public Records Officer,

Pursuant to the Washington State Public Records Act, RCW 42.56, I am requesting access to and copies of public records described below. This request is made for personal use and not for commercial purposes.

REQUESTED RECORDS

I am requesting all records related to automated surveillance camera systems operated by, accessible to, or used in partnership with [DEPARTMENT NAME], including but not limited to:

Technology Systems Covered by This Request: - Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) systems including but not limited to: - Flock Safety cameras and systems - Motorola/Vigilant Solutions - Genetec AutoVu - ELSAG systems - Neology - Any other fixed or mobile ALPR systems

- Video surveillance and monitoring systems including but not limited to:
 - Ring Neighbors Public Safety Service/Law Enforcement Portal
 - Amazon Sidewalk network access
 - Axon/Evidence.com camera integrations
 - Axon Fleet in-car camera systems
 - Body-worn camera systems with live-streaming capability
 - Real-Time Crime Center camera networks
 - Privately-owned cameras accessible to law enforcement
 - Community camera registry programs
- Facial recognition or biometric surveillance systems integrated with camera networks
- Any other mass surveillance camera technology, whether owned, leased, accessed, or operated through third-party agreements

Specific Camera Location(s) of Interest: - [INSERT CAMERA LOCATION 1 - e.g., "Intersection of Main St and 5th Ave - Flock ALPR"] - [INSERT CAMERA LOCATION 2 - e.g., "City Hall area - Ring camera partnership program"] - [INSERT CAMERA LOCATION 3 - e.g., "Highway 101 northbound - Mobile ALPR unit"] - [ADD ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS AS NEEDED] - "All other locations where such surveillance systems are deployed"

For each identified camera/surveillance location and system, and all other similar technologies operated by or accessible to your department, I request:

1. DEPLOYMENT AND OPERATIONAL RECORDS

- All contracts, agreements, or memoranda of understanding between [DEPARTMENT NAME] and surveillance technology vendors including but not limited to: Flock Safety, Ring/Amazon, Axon, Motorola, Vigilant Solutions, Genetec, and any other surveillance system providers
- Purchase orders, invoices, and payment records for all surveillance camera systems and related services
- Installation dates and locations of all surveillance cameras (include maps, network diagrams, or coverage area maps if available)
- Complete inventory of all surveillance camera systems by type, manufacturer, and location
- Current operational status of each camera/system
- Maintenance and service records for the past [TIME PERIOD - e.g., "two years"]
- Any technical specifications, operational manuals, or user guides for the camera systems
- Records of camera uptime/downtime statistics
- Integration records showing how different systems connect or share data

2. POLICY AND PROCEDURE RECORDS

- All policies, procedures, standard operating procedures (SOPs), or guidelines governing the use of surveillance camera systems including ALPR, video surveillance, and facial recognition technologies
- Data retention policies specific to each type of surveillance data (ALPR data, video footage, facial recognition data, etc.)
- Privacy impact assessments or privacy policies related to surveillance systems
- Training materials provided to officers or staff regarding surveillance camera system use
- Audit procedures or oversight mechanisms for surveillance data access and use
- Policies governing third-party access to surveillance systems (Ring Law Enforcement Portal, etc.)
- Warrant or legal process requirements for accessing surveillance footage
- Community notification or transparency policies regarding surveillance deployments

3. DATA SHARING AND ACCESS RECORDS

- Lists of all agencies, organizations, or entities with access to surveillance data collected by [DEPARTMENT NAME]
- Data sharing agreements with other law enforcement agencies (local, state, federal, tribal)
- Records of participation in any surveillance data sharing networks (Flock network, Ring Neighbors portal, regional crime centers, etc.)

- Lists of all third-party vendors with access to surveillance data
- Logs of external agency queries or access to data from the cameras/systems at the specified locations from [START DATE] to [END DATE]
- **Network audit logs showing all searches conducted by any agency, including search reasons/purposes**
- Records of any federal agency access to surveillance data (FBI, ICE, DEA, CBP/Border Patrol, HSI, etc.)
- Documentation of whether “National Lookup” or similar inter-agency search features were enabled
- Records showing whether your agency was aware of federal access to your surveillance systems
- Any agreements related to participation in inter-agency data sharing networks
- Access credentials and user accounts for external access to surveillance systems
- Records of civilian requests for footage through community camera programs
- Communications regarding federal agency access requests or data sharing
- Records of access revocations or security audits following the UW Center for Human Rights report (October 2024)

4. USAGE STATISTICS

For ALPR systems: - Total number of license plate reads captured by each camera from [START DATE] to [END DATE] - Number of “hot list” alerts generated by the specified cameras during this period - Records indicating how alerts were categorized (stolen vehicle, wanted person, missing person, etc.) - Documentation of cases where ALPR alerts led to stops, arrests, or investigations - Statistics on accuracy rates, false positive alerts, or system errors

For video surveillance systems: - Total hours of footage captured - Number of footage requests processed (by agency personnel, external agencies, or civilians) - Number of investigations assisted by surveillance footage - Response times for footage requests - Storage capacity and current usage statistics

For facial recognition systems (if applicable): - Number of searches conducted - Accuracy and false positive rates - Number of identifications made - Legal basis for each search (warrant, exigent circumstances, etc.)

For Ring/community camera programs: - Number of participating cameras or households - Number of footage requests made to Ring users - Response rates to requests - Number of investigations assisted

5. DATA RETENTION AND DELETION RECORDS

- Current data retention periods for each type of surveillance data (ALPR, video footage, facial recognition, etc.)
- Records of data deletion or purging activities
- Any policies on retaining data beyond standard retention periods
- Procedures for handling requests to delete specific data
- Storage location of surveillance data (local, cloud, third-party servers)
- Geographic location of data servers (in-state, out-of-state, international)
- Backup and redundancy procedures
- Chain of custody procedures for surveillance evidence

6. CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Email communications between [DEPARTMENT NAME] staff and

surveillance technology vendors including Flock Safety, Ring/Amazon, Axon, Motorola, Vigilant Solutions, Genetec, and any other surveillance system providers from [START DATE] to [END DATE]

- Internal communications regarding the deployment, operation, or policy related to surveillance cameras
- Any correspondence with community members, elected officials, or oversight bodies regarding surveillance cameras
- Communications with the ACLU or other civil liberties organizations regarding surveillance programs
- Marketing materials, presentations, or proposals received from surveillance technology vendors

7. FINANCIAL RECORDS

- Total costs associated with Flock camera systems (purchase, installation, subscription, maintenance)
- Budget documents allocating funds for ALPR systems
- Any cost-benefit analyses performed prior to or after deployment

8. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

- Records of public notices or community engagement regarding Flock camera deployment
- Any reports to city council, county commissioners, or other governing bodies
- Public presentations or documents related to the Flock camera program

REQUEST PARAMETERS

Time Period: [INSERT SPECIFIC DATES, e.g., "January 1, 2023 to present"] or "All records from inception of the Flock camera program to present"

Format Preference: Electronic copies via email (PDF format preferred) or secure file transfer. If electronic provision is not possible, please provide records in the most cost-effective format available.

Fee Waiver/Reduction Request: [OPTIONAL - If applicable, add: "I request a waiver or reduction of fees pursuant to RCW 42.56.120 as this request is in the public interest and not for commercial purposes. The disclosure of this information will contribute significantly to public understanding of government operations."]

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND TIMELINE

Pursuant to RCW 42.56.520, I understand that you have five (5) business days to respond to this request by either: 1. Providing the requested records; 2. Providing a reasonable estimate of the time required to respond and the cost; or 3. Denying the request with a written statement of the specific exemption authorizing the withholding and an explanation of how the exemption applies.

If any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, I request that you provide all non-exempt portions with redactions clearly marked and explained pursuant to RCW 42.56.210.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please acknowledge receipt of this request within five (5) business days. I can be reached at:

Email: [YOUR EMAIL]

Phone: [YOUR PHONE]

Mailing Address: [YOUR ADDRESS]

I prefer communication via email for efficiency and to maintain a clear record of correspondence.

CLARIFICATION

If any part of this request is unclear or requires clarification, please contact me immediately. I am happy to work with you to narrow or clarify this request to ensure compliance with the Public Records Act while obtaining the information sought.

If you determine that some portions of the requested records are exempt from disclosure, please provide all non-exempt portions. I expect a response to this request within the statutory timeframe.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

[YOUR SIGNATURE]
[YOUR PRINTED NAME]
[DATE]

NOTES FOR SUBMITTER

Before Submitting: 1. Fill in all bracketed [PLACEHOLDER] fields 2. Customize camera locations and technologies as needed 3. Adjust time periods to match your needs 4. Consider whether to request a fee waiver 5. Verify the department's preferred submission method (email, portal, mail, fax) 6. Keep a copy of your submitted request for your records 7. Document the date and method of submission

Leveraging the Recent Court Ruling: - The November 2024 Skagit County Superior Court ruling establishes that surveillance camera data is subject to RCW 42.56 - If an agency denies your request citing privacy concerns, you can reference this precedent - The judge specifically rejected the argument that broad surveillance collection creates a privacy exemption - You may want to cite: *Rodriguez v. City of Sedro Woolley*, Skagit County Superior Court (Nov. 7, 2024)

Follow-Up: - If no response within 5 business days, send a polite follow-up - Track all responses and any estimated completion dates - If request is denied on privacy grounds, reference the Skagit County ruling in your appeal - If denied based on other exemptions, request specific citation of which RCW 42.56 exemption applies - You may appeal to the department head or seek judicial review - Washington law provides for penalties if agencies improperly withhold records - Consider contacting the ACLU of Washington or other civil liberties organizations if you encounter resistance

Questions to Consider Asking Based on Recent Findings: - Does your agency have "National Lookup" or inter-agency search features enabled? - Has your agency conducted an audit of who has accessed

your surveillance data? - Was your agency aware that federal agencies may have accessed your surveillance systems? - Has your agency taken steps to prevent unauthorized federal access following the UW report?

Additional Resources: - Washington Attorney General's Office Public Records Resources: www.atg.wa.gov/public-records - RCW 42.56: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=42.56> - Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) Public Records Guide - ACLU of Washington - Technology and Liberty: <https://www.aclu-wa.org/> - UW Center for Human Rights Report on Flock Surveillance (Oct 2024): <https://jsis.washington.edu/humanrights/> - *Rodriguez v. City of Sedro Woolley* case coverage: Search "Skagit County Flock camera ruling 2024"

Organizations That May Assist: - ACLU of Washington: Provides guidance on surveillance technology and civil liberties - Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF): Resources on ALPR technology and privacy - Washington Coalition for Open Government: Public records advocacy - Institute for Justice - Plate Privacy Project: National ALPR litigation and advocacy

This template is for informational purposes and does not constitute legal advice. Consider consulting with an attorney for specific legal guidance.