

# CASE STUDY

## Johnsonville, South Carolina, USA

**Serious about ALPR. Serious about Service.**



### Customer Profile

Johnsonville, South Carolina, is a city of approximately 1400 residents in Florence County, less than an hour's drive from many major South Carolina cities, such as Florence and Myrtle Beach. The city covers 1.6 square miles, and is protected by five sworn officers of the Johnsonville Police Department.



### Background

The Johnsonville Police Department provides 24-hour coverage, and the city enjoys a low incidence of crime. The Johnsonville Police Department, while a small agency, is very forward-thinking when it comes to technology. The department has invested in state-of-the-art equipment over the last three years, relying on grants and fundraising rather than tax revenues.

"We're the only small agency around here that has a license plate recognition system," said Chief of Police Ron Douglas. "Other small towns tell me they can't afford the systems, but how can you afford not to? Your agency is so much more effective with these tools. This is one of the greatest assets to law enforcement I've seen in over 30 years of service."

### Solution

Johnsonville added two mobile automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) systems from NDI Recognition Systems (NDI-RS) to its crime-fighting arsenal three years ago. The ALPR systems are mounted on two marked police vehicles, and vehicle use is rotated so that one LPR unit is in operation at all times.

"We operate our license plate recognition systems 24/7, and we've made many cases that we otherwise would have missed," said Chief Douglas. "Our agency is much more productive, because we're checking every vehicle that goes by one of our units, rather than just making random checks. It's improved officer morale and their satisfaction with working conditions, which has also dramatically reduced officer turnover."

The Johnsonville Police Department was also able to leverage NDI-RS relationship with the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED). SLED uses the NDI-RS back office system to handle statewide license plate data, and offers law enforcement agencies in the state access to the system free of charge. That means that Johnsonville didn't have to purchase or maintain a server to handle its data.

"I saw a demonstration of the license plate readers, and contacted SLED for more information," Chief Douglas said. "We borrowed one of their units and tried it for a couple of weeks. It was unbelievable, how well it worked. We purchased one unit then and committed to buying a second six months later."

#### NDI Recognition Systems

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### Results

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The ALPR system immediately began generating a return on Johnsonville's investment, both in dollars and in resolving cases. "The system actually pays for itself," said Chief Douglas. "The revenue generated from traffic stops covered the cost of the units within the first year."

ALPR also helps the Johnsonville officers solve crimes. "We are different from other agencies, because we have a low call volume and a low crime rate," said Chief Douglas. "That gives us more time to investigate the hits we get from the license plate readers." Douglas explained that the Johnsonville police vehicles are also equipped with a second mobile data terminal (MDT), which officers use to manually conduct additional checks on the results from the ALPR system.

In one such case, officers checked the tag on a vehicle that the ALPR system had flagged as having an expired plate, though the renewal sticker was current. Their additional investigation revealed that the car had been stolen three years earlier from a car dealer across the state, when it was brand new. The vehicle had been driven 60,000 miles since then.

"I can't imagine how many police vehicles that car passed while traveling 60,000 miles," Chief Douglas said. "But because we made the effort to investigate more thoroughly using both the license plate recognition system and the MDT, we were able to recover that stolen car and make an arrest."

### Notable Successes

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- » An officer passed a vehicle without taillights at night and attempted to pull it over, but the vehicle evaded him. Though the officer couldn't see the tag, the infra-red camera on the license plate reader captured the information. The officer was able to locate the car's owner and address, and track down the driver to make an arrest.
- » In an armed robbery case, officers had a suspect and a witness description of the suspect's vehicle. Using data from SLED, they were able to pull up a picture of the vehicle taken by the ALPR system as it passed through town the day before the robbery. The witness had described a sticker on the back of the truck, which was clearly visible in the vehicle photo. The suspect was arrested for the armed robbery, a break-in, and three vehicle break-ins, and was recently convicted for the crimes, receiving a 15-year sentence.
- » A witness to a shoplifting was able to provide five out of six letters on an out-of-state tag for a vehicle used by the shoplifter. Using a wild-card search with stored ALPR data, officers determined that the same vehicle had been spotted in town by ALPR cameras two weeks before the incident, and discovered the owner was currently living in Johnsonville. The vehicle was located that night and the suspect arrested.
- » While investigating a woman reported as missing, officers used her license plate number and ALPR data to locate a picture of her vehicle. Using the picture, an officer identified the vehicle at a convenience store and was able to close the missing person report.



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