



PRESS RELEASE

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Centralia Police Department Reaffirms Commitment to Public Safety and Privacy with Flock Safety Technology

As Chief of Police, I am proud of our department and how our officers use tools to protect our residents, solve crimes, and bring justice to victims. At the same time, we recognize the importance of transparency and accountability in balancing the use of new law enforcement tools with the trust we are given to protect our community while upholding privacy and constitutional rights.

Flock Safety is a targeted investigative tool that captures images of the rear portions of vehicles with license plates to help identify suspects who commit crimes against our community. Flock Safety has been instrumental in resolving cases that might otherwise go unsolved, from murders and assaults to hit-and-runs and drug investigations. By focusing on vehicle identifiers, Flock allows our officers to identify criminals who prey on the innocent for personal gain, without intruding into the daily lives of law-abiding citizens.

I understand that some in our community have genuine concerns about surveillance technologies, and I welcome the opportunity to address those concerns. Narratives portraying Flock as an overreaching "Big Brother" system often stem from misinformation or conflate its narrow, vehicle-specific function with broader fears. For instance, claims suggesting the system enables warrantless biometric tracking or demographic profiling are untrue. Flock's cameras capture the rear portion of vehicles and do not allow searches of facial images, individuals on foot, or analysis of personal characteristics such as race, gender, or ethnicity. To illustrate, consider this recent image captured by one of our Flock cameras:



This demonstrates our system's limited scope back-of-vehicle data, used exclusively for legitimate law enforcement purposes.

In Washington State, Flock Safety includes built-in filters that automatically exclude our devices from any searches connected to immigration enforcement. Our use of Flock is governed by CPD Policy, which treats it as protected information. Access is limited to trained personnel with a valid work-related need, and unauthorized use for personal curiosity or any non-legitimate reason is prohibited, with potential administrative consequences. Furthermore, state law and our policy forbid the use of the system based on protected classifications, including race, gender, religion, political affiliation, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability. These safeguards, coupled with timely data deletion (30 days unless tied to an active investigation), strict access logs, and purpose-specific limitations, prevent misuse and uphold the impartial justice our community deserves.

To build even greater trust, CPD is taking a proactive step toward increasing transparency. Beginning December 1, 2025, we will publish bi-monthly audits of our Flock Safety usage directly on the Centralia PD website (<https://www.cityofcentralia.com/254/Police>). These reports, drawn from Flock's comprehensive activity logs, will detail the date and time of each query, along with a brief description of its purpose, such as supporting a burglary investigation or hit-and-run response. Audits will be posted on the 1st and 15th of each month (or the next business day), providing visibility into how this tool serves our mission.

As concerns persist from sources like the recent University of Washington report, I want to reassure our residents that the CPD stands firm as a defender of privacy and due process. Public safety tools like Flock are not deployed to erode freedoms but to protect them, aiding real victims harmed by those who exploit vulnerability. It is a precise instrument for accountability, checked by policy, law, and our professional ethic.