

SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (sUAS) OPERATIONS POLICY EXAMPLE

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NOTE: THIS POLICY EXAMPLE IS TO BE USED FOR EDUCATIONAL/REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY. REFER TO FAA AUTHORIZATIONS AND WAIVERS, INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES, INTERNAL POLICIES, MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS, AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTING sUAS POLICY IN ANY JURISDICTION.

ABSTRACT

Drone technology is transforming public safety for the better. Fire, emergency management, and law enforcement agencies use drones every day to provide situational awareness during emergency situations when every moment matters. Obtaining real-time awareness in dangerous scenarios results in better outcomes, greater accountability, and increased leadership involvement in events as they unfold. Drones also provide a means of de-escalation--providing a perspective that allows for safe and thoughtful problem solving. Like body-worn cameras, drones provide an account of what occurred, but they also provide a pre-emptive capability to prevent tragedy and protect the community. When used appropriately, drones are a tool for good.

PURPOSE & SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish guidelines for the use of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) by [AGENCY NAME]
- Establish guidelines for the storage, retrieval, and dissemination of data captured by the UAS.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all [AGENCY NAME] employees who perform or manage unmanned aircraft operations. Any unmanned aircraft flown by [AGENCY NAME] personnel, during their scheduled work shift or for official [AGENCY NAME] business, must adhere to this policy.

DEFINITIONS

COA	Certificate of Authorization, issued by the Air Traffic Organization to a public operator for a specific unmanned aircraft activity.
DFR	Drone as First Responder - a type of unmanned aircraft operation where unmanned aircraft are strategically deployed from predetermined locations to respond to

	emergency situations, with the goal to arrive before human first responders. DFR is being rapidly adopted by various emergency services, including law enforcement and firefighting, to enhance response times, to improve situational awareness, and to help de-escalate interactions between law enforcement and the public.
Drone	A common term for sUA
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
GCS	Ground Control Station. This is the part of the sUAS that the Remote Pilot interacts with to operate the aircraft (a handheld controller, a computer web-browser, etc)
NAS	National Airspace System
Part 107	Federal rules governing the use of commercial, small UAS operations in the United States
Part 91	Federal Aviation Administration rules that govern general operating and flight rules in the National Airspace System. These rules also govern operation of sUAS when operated as a public aircraft under a public safety COA.
sUA	Small Unmanned Aircraft. This term refers to the unmanned aircraft by aircraft itself, not the controller or other associated equipment.
sUAS	Small Unmanned Aircraft System, this term encompasses the unmanned aircraft, the ground control station, and any other supporting equipment used to conduct flight operations. Small specifically refers to an aircraft that weighs less than 55 pounds.

Refer to FAA Advisory Circular 107-2 for additional terms and definitions.

POLICY (OR POLICY OBJECTIVES)

[AGENCY NAME] is committed to the responsible use of UAS in our city. This policy addresses the “Five C’s” of responsible UAS use:

1. Clear Oversight and Accountability
2. Community Engagement and Transparency
3. Civil Liberties and Privacy Protection
4. Common Operating Procedures
5. Cybersecurity

OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

[List executive level roles and responsibilities here with examples including -]

1. UAS Committee members of [AGENCY NAME] stakeholders

A cross-functional group of [AGENCY NAME] personnel that provides a forum to coordinate and discuss internal matters relating to the use of UAS.

- Review proposals concerning approval levels for UAS operations, qualifications, training;
- Review UAS policies;
- Facilitate the annual summary of UAS operations;
- Facilitate UAS procurement and insurance;
- Provide internal oversight and recommend changes or improvements to this Policy.

- Provide responses to external oversight groups such as city council or police commissions
- Develop community engagement strategic plan

2. UAS Program Manager / Program Coordinator

- Responsible for administrative functions of the UAS program such as:
- Applying for and managing FAA approvals (Certificates of Authorizations, waivers, etc)
- Financial aspects of the program including determining sources of funding and development of a budget
- Hiring of all other UAS program roles
- Procurement of UAS and other support equipment
- Developing strategic plans with cross-functional company teams to identify how UAS will be used at the company
- Company-wide reporting including operational summaries, community engagement activities, and the value of the UAS operations
- Ensuring flight crews are appropriately qualified and trained
- Developing data policies including storage and security

The UAS Program Manager may work closely with, and leverage, other departments at the Agency.

3. Remote Pilot(s)

Responsible for the safe operation of an unmanned aircraft and must be qualified and trained in accordance with [AGENCY NAME] policy.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY

The agency will deploy a UAS Transparency Dashboard that provides the community with information about how and why UAS are being deployed for law enforcement purposes. This dashboard can be found at: [INSERT URL]

The agency will also conduct community outreach and engagement events, such as:

- **Press Conferences:** availability to brief the media and community on what the program's actions, the benefits of drone applications, and share program wins.
- **Police Athletic League (PAL) Partnerships:** many police agencies have PAL programs, consider working with a local PAL program to bring drone education and career exposure to students.
- **Schools & Educators:** Identify local schools and speak with educators about opportunities to present to students about how drones are being used in the community, career paths, and even encourage hands-on flying time for students.

- **YMCAs and Boys & Girls Clubs:** Partnering with your local non-profit youth programs can provide opportunities to speak with kids and parents in the community about drones, careers, and use cases. These orgs are often looking for additional STEM programming and guest speakers.
- **Connect with your City Manager:** Develop a relationship with your local city manager to know when local festivals and events take place. There may be opportunities to have a tent and booth to meet and greet your community and share about the program. This can range from local food events, maker fairs, or festivals where you'd have an opportunity to speak with your community.

PRIVACY

Public safety drone programs should be designed to promote and protect privacy and civil liberties. Absent a warrant or exigent circumstances, operators and observers shall adhere to FAA regulations and shall not intentionally record or transmit images of any location where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Operators and observers shall take reasonable precautions to avoid inadvertently recording or transmitting images of areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy. Reasonable precautions can include, for example, deactivating or turning imaging devices away from such areas or persons during UAS operations.

The use and dissemination of information gathered by drone should generally be limited to the extent necessary to facilitate a civil proceeding, criminal investigation or prosecution, or other authorized reason (such as facilitating community engagement by showing the operation of the program, including illustrative examples of success and challenges).

ANNUAL PRIVACY ASSESSMENT

The UAS Committee should direct an annual privacy assessment of the department's sUAS policies to ensure compliance with existing local, state and federal laws, regulations, and policies relating to privacy and civil liberties. Where appropriate, the committee can make recommendations to amend existing department guidelines.

PROCUREMENT

The UAS Program Manager is responsible for reviewing and approving unmanned aircraft and supporting equipment purchases in accordance with [AGENCY NAME] procurement policies.

OPERATING PROCEDURES

Operations shall be conducted in accordance with [AGENCY NAME] UAS General Operating Manual and other agency policies. Crewmembers will adhere to all Federal Aviation Regulations

(Part 107, Part 91, and others), the conditions and limitations of any applicable FAA operational approvals, and any relevant state and local regulations.

[list any other relevant agency policies such as code of conduct]

AUTHORIZED USES

Only [AGENCY]-authorized operators who have completed the required training shall be permitted to deploy the sUAS system for the following purposes:

1. Responding to any call for service duly logged in a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system in the normal course of business;
2. Apprehension of criminal offenders, including, but not limited to, locating and apprehending criminal offenders, supporting warrant service, supporting critical incidents such as barricaded suspects, and pursuing fleeing criminal offenders;
3. Protecting life, limb, and property, including, but not limited to, search and/or rescue, disaster response, terrorism, mass casualty incidents, crime and accident scene documentation and reconstruction, or response to individuals in physical or mental distress;
4. Support of other government agency activities and functions, including, but not limited to, infrastructure inspections, marketing, emergency management and disaster response, or surveying and mapping.
5. UAS program readiness activities including, but not limited to, training, certification, evaluation, and maintenance.

PROHIBITED USES

[AGENCY NAME] will not use unmanned aircraft for the following purposes:

1. To conduct random and mass surveillance unrelated to the prevention of crime;
2. To conduct activities prohibited by any applicable local, state, or federal law;

UAS shall not be equipped with a weapon or device designed to deliver lethal force.

UAS DATA AND CYBERSECURITY (EVIDENCE COLLECTION AND RETENTION)

Data collected by the UAS shall be managed and retained in accordance with [REFERENCE DATA POLICY].

Describe data management process here or reference an existing data management policy. One common example is aligning unmanned aircraft data to body worn camera policies.

CONTACT

For questions or feedback about this policy, contact [WHO].