

Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Operations

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805.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the use of an unmanned aerial system (UAS) and for the storage, retrieval, and dissemination of images and data captured by the UAS.

805.2 DEFINITIONS

Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) - An unmanned aircraft of any type that is capable of sustaining directed flight, whether preprogrammed or remotely controlled (also referred to as an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), and all of the supporting or attached systems designed for gathering information through imaging, recording, or any other means.

805.3 POLICY

Unmanned aerial systems may be used to enhance the department's mission of protecting lives and property when other means and resources are unavailable or less effective. Any use of a UAS will be in strict accordance with constitutional and privacy rights and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations.

805.4 PRIVACY

The use of the UAS potentially involves privacy considerations. Absent a warrant or exigent circumstances, operators and observers shall adhere to FAA altitude regulations. 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.

805.5 PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The Chief of Police or his designee will appoint a program coordinator responsible for managing the UAS program. The program coordinator will ensure that policies and procedures conform to current laws, regulations, and best practices, and will have the following additional responsibilities:

1. Ensuring that all authorized operators and required observers have completed all required FAA and department-approved training in the operation, applicable laws, policies, and procedures regarding use of the UAS.

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2. Developing an operational protocol governing the deployment and operation of a UAS, including, but not limited to, safety oversight, use of visual observers, establishment of lost link procedures, and secure communication with air traffic control facilities
3. Developing protocols to ensure that all data intended to be used as evidence is accessed, maintained, stored, and retrieved in a manner that ensures its integrity as evidence, including strict adherence to chain of custody requirements. Electronic trails, including encryption, authenticity certificates, and data and time stamping, shall be used as appropriate to preserve individual rights and to ensure the authenticity and maintenance of a secure evidentiary chain of custody.
4. Developing protocols that ensure retention and purge periods are maintained in accordance with established records retention schedules.
5. Facilitating law enforcement access to images and data captured by the UAS.
6. Recommending program enhancements, particularly regarding safety and information security.

805.6 PILOT-IN-COMMAND

Pilot-in-Command (PIC) are certified by the UAS Program Coordinator to operate department-owned UAS. PICs have the final authority and responsibility for the operation and safety of any mission or flight. PICs are responsible for ensuring the flight complies with department policy, procedures, and training. PICs are also responsible for ensuring the flight is conducted within the FAA regulations, certificate of authorization, and any applicable laws.

PICs should consider the following before each flight:

1. The flight can safely be made, taking into account the latest information available, such as weather reports and forecasts, and any alternative course of action which can be adopted in case the flight cannot be completed as planned;
2. The equipment that is carried is in sufficient condition for use;
3. The aircraft is in every way fit for the intended flight;
4. The load carried by the aircraft is of such weight, and is so distributed and secured, that it may safely be carried on the intended flight;
5. Be satisfied that it is capable of safely taking off, reaching and maintaining a safe height, and making a safe landing at the place of intended destination, having regard to:

i. the performance of the flying machine in the conditions to be expected on the intended flight; and

ii. any obstructions at the places of departure and intended destination and on the intended route.

805.7 VISUAL OBSERVERS

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Visual observers (VO) should be recommended for any night flights conducted by a PIC. VOs must be focused on the UAS safety during the duration of the flight. The VO is responsible for:

1. Notifying the flight team when anything unusual happens or might occur, so the flight team can respond accordingly; and
2. Keeping an overview of possible other aircraft or obstacles in the vicinity of the UAS; and
3. Maintaining a clear take-off/landing site by informing and instructing passers-by or spectators to stay at a safe distance; and
4. Making sure that the PIC does not get distracted from its main task of safely controlling the UAS.

805.8 TRAINING

All members of the UAS unit shall attend and pass applicable training for their position in accordance with FAA regulations and departmental protocol. Continuous and ongoing training is required.

805.9 MEDICAL FACTORS

1. Crew members shall only deploy the UAS when rested and emotionally prepared for the tasks at hand.
2. Physical illness, exhaustion, emotional problems, etc., can seriously impair judgment, memory, and alertness. The safest rule is not to act as a PIC or Observer when suffering from any of the above. Members are expected to "stand down" when these problems could reasonably be expected to affect their ability to perform their duties.
3. Performance can be seriously hampered by prescription and over-the-counter drugs. No crew member should be involved with any mission or training if their performance could be affected.
4. No member should be involved with any mission or training within eight hours after consumption of any alcoholic beverage or while under the influence of alcohol.

805.10 USE OF UAS

Only authorized and certified operators who have completed the required training shall be permitted to operate the UAS.

805.11 PROHIBITED USE

The UAS video surveillance equipment shall not be used:

1. To target a person based solely on individual characteristics, such as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, gender, or sexual orientation.
2. To harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.
3. To conduct personal business of any type.

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805.12 RETENTION OF UAS DATA

[Data collected by the UAS shall be retained as provided in the established records retention schedule.](#)

805.13 REVISIONS

[Revised: July 29, 2026](#)