



SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS

Model Policy

<i>Effective Date</i> May 2015		<i>Number</i>	
<i>Subject</i> Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems			
<i>Reference</i>		<i>Special Instructions</i>	
<i>Distribution</i>		<i>Reevaluation Date</i>	<i>No. Pages</i> 3

I. PURPOSE

This policy is intended to provide personnel who are assigned responsibilities associated with the deployment and use of small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) with instructions on when and how this technology and the information it provides may be used for law enforcement and public safety purposes in accordance with law.¹

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this department that duly trained and authorized agency personnel may deploy sUAS when such use is appropriate in the performance of their official duties, and where deployment and use, and the collection and use of any audio/video recordings or other data originating from or generated by the sUAS, comport with the policy provisions provided herein and applicable law.

III. DEFINITIONS

Digital Multimedia Evidence (DME): Digital recording of images, sounds, and associated data.

Model Aircraft: A remote controlled aircraft used by hobbyists that is built, produced, manufactured, and operated for the purposes of sport, recreation, and/or competition.

Unmanned Aircraft (UA) or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV): An aircraft that is intended to navigate in the air without an on-board pilot. Also alternatively called Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), or Drone.

Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS): A system that includes the necessary equipment, network, and personnel to control an unmanned aircraft.

Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS): UAS systems that utilize UAVs weighing less than 55 pounds and are consistent with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations governing model aircraft.

UAS Flight Crewmember: A pilot, visual observer, payload operator or other person assigned duties for a UAS for the purpose of flight or training exercise.

Unmanned Aircraft Pilot: A person exercising control over a UA/UAV/UAS during flight.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Administration

All deployments of sUAS must be specifically authorized by the chief executive officer (CEO) of this agency or authorized supervisory personnel. This agency has adopted the use of sUAS to provide an aerial visual perspective in responding to emergency situations and exigent circumstances, and for the following objectives:

1. **Situational Awareness:** To assist decision makers (e.g., incident command staff; first responders; city, county, and state officials) in understanding the nature, scale, and scope of an incident—and for planning and coordinating an effective response.
2. **Search and Rescue:** To assist missing person investigations, AMBER Alerts, Silver Alerts, and other search and rescue missions.

¹ Some states have statutes that govern operation of UAS by public safety agencies. Consult your legal counsel for state and local laws that affect your agency.

3. Tactical Deployment: To support the tactical deployment of officers and equipment in emergency situations (e.g., incidents involving hostages and barricades, support for large-scale tactical operations, and other temporary perimeter security situations).
 4. Visual Perspective: To provide an aerial visual perspective to assist officers in providing direction for crowd control, traffic incident management, special circumstances, and temporary perimeter security.
 5. Scene Documentation: To document a crime scene, accident scene, or other major incident scene (e.g., disaster management, incident response, large-scale forensic scene investigation).
- B. Procedures for sUAS Use
1. The agency must obtain applicable authorizations, permits, or certificates required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prior to deploying or operating the sUAS, and these authorizations, permits, and certificates shall be maintained and current.
 2. The sUAS will be operated only by personnel (pilots and crew members) who have been trained and certified in the operation of the system.
 3. The sUAS-certified personnel shall inspect and test sUAS equipment prior to each deployment to verify the proper functioning of all equipment and the airworthiness of the device.
 4. The sUAS equipment is the responsibility of individual officers and will be used with reasonable care to ensure proper functioning. Equipment malfunctions shall be brought to the attention of the officer's supervisor as soon as possible so that an appropriate repair can be made or a replacement unit can be procured.
 5. The sUAS equipment and all data, images, video, and metadata captured, recorded, or otherwise produced by the equipment is the sole property of the agency.
 6. All flights will be documented on a form or database designed for that purpose, and all flight time shall be accurately recorded. In addition, each deployment of the sUAS shall include information regarding the reason for the flight; the time, date, and location of the flight; the name of the supervisor approving the deployment and the staff assigned; and a summary of the activities covered, actions taken, and outcomes from the deployment.
 7. Except for those instances where officer safety or investigation could be jeopardized—and where reasonably possible and practical, agencies should consider notifying the public.
 8. Where there are specific and articulable grounds to believe that the sUAS will collect evidence of criminal wrongdoing and/or if the sUAS will be used in a manner that may intrude upon reasonable expectations of privacy, the agency will obtain a search warrant prior to conducting the flight.
- C. Restrictions on Using the sUAS
1. The sUAS shall be deployed and used only to support official law enforcement and public safety missions.
 2. The sUAS shall not be operated in an unsafe manner or in violation of FAA rules.
 3. The sUAS shall not be equipped with weapons of any kind.
- D. DME Retention and Management
1. All DME shall be handled in accordance with existing policy on data and record retention, where applicable.
 2. All DME shall be securely downloaded at the completion of each mission. The sUAS-certified operators will record information for each file that shall include the date, time, location, and case reference numbers or other mission identifiers—and identify the sUAS personnel involved in mission.
 3. Officers shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute in any manner sUAS DME without prior written authorization and approval of the CEO or his or her designee.
 4. All access to sUAS DME must be specifically authorized by the CEO or his or her designee, and all access is to be audited to ensure that only authorized users are accessing the data for legitimate and authorized purposes.
 5. Files should be securely stored in accordance with agency policy and state records retention laws and retained no longer than necessary for purposes of training or for use in an investigation or prosecution.
- E. sUAS Supervision and Reporting
1. sUAS supervisory personnel shall manage all deployments and uses of sUAS to ensure that officers equipped with sUAS devices utilize them in accordance with policy and procedures defined herein.

2. An authorized sUAS supervisor or administrator will audit flight documentation at regular intervals. The results of the audit will be documented. Any changes to the flight time counter will be documented.
3. The CEO of the agency or his or her designee shall publish an annual report documenting the agency's deployment and use of sUAS devices.

F. Training

1. Police personnel who are assigned sUAS must complete an agency-approved training program to ensure proper use and operations. Additional training may be required at periodic intervals to ensure the continued effective use and operation and proper calibration and performance of the equipment and to incorporate changes, updates, or other revisions in policy and equipment.
2. All agency personnel with sUAS responsibilities, including command officers, shall also be trained in the local and federal laws and regulations, as well as policies and procedures governing the deployment and use of sUAS.

Every effort has been made by the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory board to ensure that this document incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no "model" policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. Each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of federal court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities among other factors.

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Acknowledgment

This document was developed by the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center in cooperation with the IACP Aviation Committee.