



# SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



525.09  
Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)  
5-13-22

## **PURPOSE**

This policy establishes guidelines for the use and oversight of the Sacramento Police Department's Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). The City of Sacramento and the Police Department intends to use the UAS Program to support municipal operations in a safe, responsible, transparent manner, in order to increase the quality of life in Sacramento.

## **POLICY**

It shall be the policy of the Sacramento Police Department to utilize Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) for official law enforcement purposes to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public safety efforts in a manner that safeguards the privacy of our community. Safety and privacy shall be the primary concern in each and every operation. Use of a UAS will be in strict accordance with State and Federal laws and in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and City regulations. For the purposes of this order, the designee for the Chief of Police shall be either a lieutenant assigned to the Metro Division or the Metro Division Captain.

## **PROCEDURE**

### **A. DEFINITIONS**

1. Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) - A waiver granted by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) giving permission to trained and certified pilots to fly within specific parameters and predetermined boundaries.
2. Command System – Remote controller and screen/application used to control and operate UAS.
3. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) -The national aviation authority of the United States with powers to generally regulate all aspects of American aviation.
4. Visual Observer (VO) – Secondary operator who assists the pilot with approved missions.
5. Pilot – Authorized operator of the UAS.
6. Program Manager – Metro Air Ops/Traffic Lieutenant, or designated by the Chief of Police
7. UAS Sergeant – A sergeant assigned to the UAS Unit, or sergeant responsible for the direct supervision of the UAS Unit.
8. Recorded Media - Video signals recorded or digitally stored on a storage device or portable media.
9. Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) – System consisting of an unmanned aircraft or unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) weighing less than 55lbs. and equipment necessary for the safe and efficient operation of that aircraft.
10. Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) – An unmanned aircraft of any type that is capable of sustaining flight, whether programmed or remotely controlled. UAVs are a component of an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS).
11. Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) – A UAS consists of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and all of the supporting or attached systems designed for gathering information through imaging, recording or any other means.

### **B. TRAINING**

1. Police personnel who are assigned to the UAS unit must complete a department approved initial and recurring training to ensure proper use and operations.
2. All agency personnel with UAS responsibilities shall also be trained in the local and federal laws and regulations, as well as policies and procedures governing the deployment and use of UAS.
3. Use of any UAS systems for training shall require approval from the UAS Sergeant.
4. Any audio, video, or images captured during training flights shall be retained for at least 90 days. Any training video which inadvertently captures images or evidence related to a crime or other significant event shall be retained in accordance with the City of Sacramento video retention schedule.
5. The UAS Sergeant shall include flyaway, lost link, and crash-landing procedures into the training curriculum.



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6. UAS detection systems may be deployed with management approval, for large, outdoor public events where there could be a risk to public safety. They shall not be used for First Amendment related events.
7. Prior to UAS operation at night, the UAS Sergeant shall implement training procedures that specifically address physiological conditions which may degrade night vision and overcoming visual illusions caused by darkness. Night operations shall comply with the applicable COA when necessary.
8. Any training done away from a police facility shall be conducted within FAA Regulations.

## C. DEPLOYMENT

1. Only authorized operators who have completed the required training shall be permitted to operate the UAS during approved missions.
2. UAS shall only be deployed with the approval of the on-duty watch commander, his/her designee or a lieutenant assigned to the Metro Division. UAS may be deployed for required department training with the approval of the Metro UAS Sergeant.
3. UAS deployment will be considered when an aerial view would assist officers or incident commanders with the following situations:
  - a. Major collision investigation and recreation
  - b. Missing persons or search and rescue operations
  - c. Natural disaster management
  - d. Post-event crime scene photography and documentation
  - e. SWAT, tactical or other public safety and life preservation missions
  - f. In response to specific requests from local, state or federal fire authorities for fire response and/or prevention.
  - g. Pursuant to a search warrant
  - h. 3D mapping of critical infrastructure or locations used for large scale public events
  - i. Other events as authorized by the Chief of Police or his/her designee
4. UAS shall not be used:
  - a. to conduct random surveillance on citizens.
  - b. to harass, intimidate or discriminate against any individual or group.
  - c. to conduct personal business of any type.
  - d. in an unsafe manner or in violation of FAA rules and regulations outside of our Certificate of Waiver or Authorization.
5. All UAS flights should be verbally broadcast over the radio to ensure dispatch and personnel on scene are aware of the flight. A second broadcast should be made when each mission is complete and the UAS has terminated its flight. Dispatch shall record the time of deployment and flight termination on the call.
6. Department UAS shall only be operated by Sacramento Police Department employees.

## D. PRIVACY

1. The use of UAS involves privacy considerations. City employees shall adhere to FAA altitude regulations and shall not intentionally record or transmit images of any location where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy, absent a warrant, court order, or appropriate exigent circumstances. Employees shall take reasonable precautions to avoid inadvertently recording or transmitting images of areas where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists.
2. Use of vision enhancement technology (e.g. thermal or other imaging equipment not generally available to the public) is permissible in viewing areas only where there is no protectable privacy interest or when in compliance with a warrant, court order, or appropriate exigent circumstances. In all other instances, legal counsel should be consulted.

## E. DATA MANAGEMENT AND RECORDS RETENTION

1. All flight hours will be logged and retained for a minimum of two years.
2. Flight summaries will be made available for public review and dissemination.
3. Video recordings will be retained for a minimum of 18 months from the date created in accordance with the City of Sacramento retention schedule. Video recordings that become evidence will be kept in accordance with the crime classification listing in the City of Sacramento retention schedule.



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4. Digital evidence captured by UAS cameras shall be treated as official records and handled pursuant to existing department policies and procedures.
5. Any attempt to erase, alter, or tamper with UAS camera recordings, except as authorized by law or department policy, will be considered employee misconduct.
6. All recordings made using UAS cameras are the property of the Sacramento Police Department and will not be released or disseminated to a third party without the express written consent of the Chief of Police or authorized designee, or unless otherwise expressly required by law.

## F. USE OF VIDEO FOR TRAINING

1. Recordings may be used for training purposes.
2. When a recording contains footage that may embarrass an employee, consideration should be given before the video is used for training.
3. If an involved employee objects to the use of a recording, the employee may object in writing through his/her chain of command to the Chief of Police or authorized designee to determine if the training value outweighs the employee's objection. In no event shall any recording be used for the purpose of ridiculing or embarrassing any employee.

## G. JOINT OPERATIONS

The on-duty watch commander, his/her designee, or the Metro Air Ops/Traffic Lieutenant may approve the use of UAS as a part of mutual aid situations.

## H. COMMUNITY OUTREACH DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER AUTHORIZED DEPLOYMENTS

In an effort to encourage public trust and effectively engage our community, the use of a UAS as part of community engagement or a special event is authorized. The UAS demonstration should be limited to showcasing the department's investigative capabilities and educating the public on the UAS program. Outreach demonstrations and other authorized deployments shall be authorized by the Outreach and Engagement Sergeant and a UAS Sergeant.