


ARLINGTON COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE		
SOP# /Cat 1	SUBJECT: Unmanned Aircraft Systems	
Initiated mm/dd/yy		
Revised mm/dd/yy	APPROVED: David Povlitz Fire Chief	

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To establish policy and procedures for the Unmanned Aircraft System used by the County public safety agencies.

2. POLICY

- 2.1. The Arlington County Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Program is an interagency capability between:
 - 2.1.1. Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD)
 - 2.1.2. Arlington County Police Department (ACPD)
 - 2.1.3. Department of Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management (DPSCEM)
- 2.2. The UAS Program is designed to enhance the County’s ability to respond to emergency incidents through the deployment of remotely operated aircraft. The UAS Program will only be utilized for specific public safety missions and will be operated only by trained and authorized personnel in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. Air Boss – The individual in charge of a Flight Crew. The Air Boss supervises equipment and personnel, and is responsible for all administrative functions, during a UAS deployment.
- 3.2. Digital Evidence – Digital audio and visual recordings, and the associated metadata, captured by a UAS.
- 3.3. Flight Crew – A team responsible for operating a UAS during a deployment. A Flight Crew is made up of an Air Boss, Remote Pilot in Command, and Visual Observer.
- 3.4. UAS Program Manager – The individual designated by each participating agency to administer that agency’s UAS program.
- 3.5. Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC) – The individual in actual control of a UAS via remote controller.
- 3.6. Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) – An unmanned aircraft (commonly referred to as a “drone”) and its associated elements, including communication links and components that control the aircraft.
- 3.7. Visual Observer – The individual responsible for assisting with the safe operation of a UAS by identifying other air traffic or objects in the air or on the ground.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1. General Provisions

- 4.1.1. The UAS program shall be used only to support the missions of participating agencies and for legitimate purposes such as situational awareness of public safety incidents, search and rescue operations, and evidence collection, in accordance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations.
- 4.1.2. The UAS program shall be limited to personnel assigned to it by the Fire Chief, or designee, and who have received department-approved UAS training.
- 4.1.3. Flight Crews shall operate a UAS in accordance with the 4th Amendment and all applicable statutory and case law.
- 4.1.4. A UAS shall be operated in a safe manner.
- 4.1.5. A UAS shall not be equipped with a weapon of any kind.

4.2. Training

- 4.2.1. Before participating in a UAS deployment, assigned personnel shall receive department-approved UAS training, including training on the legal aspects of UAS operations.
- 4.2.2. The UAS Program Manager shall conduct quarterly refresher training for that agency's program personnel.
- 4.2.3. To serve as an RPIC in a UAS operation, an individual must have served as an RPIC in either a deployment or a training flight within the previous 90 days.

4.3. Operations

- 4.3.1. All UAS missions shall be approved by the UAS Program Manager. Supervisory personnel shall oversee all uses of UAS to ensure officers operate a UAS in accordance with applicable policies, laws, and regulations.
- 4.3.2. All flights, including training flights, shall be documented on a form or database designed for that purpose, and all flight time shall be accurately recorded. This documentation shall include:
 - 4.3.2.1. Time, date, location, and duration of the flight
 - 4.3.2.2. Aircraft make and model
 - 4.3.2.3. Identity of the Flight Crew
 - 4.3.2.4. reason for the flight
 - 4.3.2.5. supervisor who approved the flight
 - 4.3.2.6. agency report number, if applicable
 - 4.3.2.7. summary of the activities covered, actions taken, and outcomes from the flight
- 4.3.3. Public notification shall be made for all pre-planned UAS deployments, such as special events, unless such notification would jeopardize personnel safety and/or a criminal investigation.

4.4. Digital Evidence Management

- 4.4.1. All Digital Evidence shall be stored in Evidence.com and managed by ACPD.
- 4.4.2. All Digital Evidence shall be handled in accordance with ACPD policy governing the use of Evidence.com and in accordance with the applicable Library of Virginia retention schedule.
- 4.4.3. All digital evidence shall be securely transferred to Evidence.com at the completion of each flight.
- 4.4.4. Personnel shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute Digital Evidence in any manner without prior authorization from the Fire Chief, or designee.

- 4.4.5. All access to Digital Evidence shall be specifically authorized by agency policy. UAS Program Managers shall conduct an annual audit of Digital Evidence access to ensure only authorized users are accessing the data and for legitimate purposes.
- 4.4.6. Each agency's UAS Program Manager is responsible for complying with Virginia Freedom of Information Act requests for Digital Evidence collected by the Program Manager's agency.
- 4.5. Oversight
 - 4.5.1. Any complaint arising from the use of UAS shall be handled in accordance with the operating agency's protocols for internal investigations.
 - 4.5.2. Each UAS Program Manager shall audit their agency's flight documentation monthly. The results of the audit shall be submitted to the Fire Chief, or designee, for review. At a minimum, this audit shall include:
 - 4.5.2.1. the number of deployments and training activities
 - 4.5.2.2. total flight time, to include a review of flight logs or data from flight time counters
 - 4.5.2.3. an evaluation of the effectiveness of a UAS during a deployment
 - 4.5.2.4. any safety or equipment concerns
 - 4.5.2.5. any use of an UAS in violation of policy or law, if applicable
 - 4.5.3. The program will publish an annual report which will be a public document shared with the community.
- 4.6. Maintenance
 - 4.6.1. Each UAS shall be inspected quarterly to ensure it is airworthy.
 - 4.6.2. Any UAS with a defect affecting its ability to operate safely shall be grounded until it is repaired.
 - 4.6.3. The UAS Program Managers shall implement a maintenance program in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. The maintenance program shall identify personnel authorized to perform maintenance on a UAS and the required training for those personnel.
 - 4.6.4. Records shall be kept of all maintenance and repairs performed on UAS equipment.

END