



POLICY MEMORANDUM

TO: DPSCEM All Staff

FROM: William Flagler Jr., Acting Director, Department of Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management

DATE: January 2023

SUBJECT: Policy for use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) by DPSCEM

I. Policy

The Arlington County Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Program is an interagency capability between the Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD), the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD), and the Department of Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management (DPSCEM). 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.

II. Definitions

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.

Digital Evidence – Digital audio and visual recordings, and the associated metadata, captured by a UAS.

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.

UAS Program Manager – The individual designated by each participating agency to administer that agency's UAS program.

Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC) – The individual in actual control of a UAS via remote controller.

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.

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

III. Procedure

A. General Provisions

1. The UAS program shall be used only to support the missions of participating agencies and for legitimate purposes relevant to DPSCEM's responsibilities in hazard mitigation and consequence management.
2. The UAS program shall be limited to personnel assigned to it by the Director or DPSCEM, or designee, and who have received department-approved UAS training.
3. Flight Crews shall operate a UAS in accordance with the 4th Amendment and all applicable statutory and case law.
4. A UAS shall be operated in a safe manner.
5. A UAS shall not be equipped with a weapon of any kind.

B. Training

1. DPSCEM will identify an UAS Program Manager.
2. DPSCEM will not have personnel perform as an UAS Flight Crew member during UAS missions.

C. Operations

1. DPSCEM will submit UAS mission requests through the DPSCEM UAS Program Manager to the other respective public safety UAS Program Managers. Public safety UAS Program Managers will collectively approve and prioritize UAS missions based on justification and demand.
2. 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.
3. 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:
 - a. time, date, location, and duration of the flight
 - b. aircraft make and model
 - c. identity of the Flight Crew
 - d. reason for the flight
 - e. supervisor who approved the flight
 - f. agency report number, if applicable



g. summary of the activities covered, actions taken, and outcomes from the flight

4. 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.

a. Public safety UAS Program Managers will provide courtesy notifications to the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) of UAS deployments as necessary. This will allow Emergency Communications Technicians (ECTs) to respond to concerned community members who contact the ECC regarding drone operations in their area.

D. Digital Evidence Management

1. All Digital Evidence shall be stored in Evidence.com and managed by ACPD. DPSCEM will request digital evidence for submission to state and federal partners as necessary to meet hazard mitigation project assessments and preliminary damage assessments.

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.

3. All digital evidence shall be securely transferred to Evidence.com at the completion of each flight.

4. Personnel shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute Digital Evidence in any manner without prior authorization from the Director, or designee.

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.

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.

E. Oversight

1. Any complaint arising from the use of UAS shall be handled in accordance with the operating agency's protocols for internal investigations.

2. Each UAS Program Manager shall audit their agency's flight documentation monthly. The results of the audit shall be submitted to the Director, or designee for review. At a minimum, this audit shall include:

a. the number of deployments and training activities



- b. total flight time, to include a review of flight logs or data from flight time counters
 - c. an evaluation of the effectiveness of a UAS during a deployment
 - d. any safety or equipment concerns
 - e. any use of an UAS in violation of policy or law, if applicable
3. The program will publish an annual report which will be a public document shared with the community.

F. Maintenance

1. Each UAS shall be inspected quarterly to ensure it is airworthy.
2. Any UAS with a defect affecting its ability to operate safely shall be grounded until it is repaired.
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. Records shall be kept of all maintenance and repairs performed on UAS equipment.