	ANCHORAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE	Distribution ALL PERSONNEL	Policy Number **7.10**
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Policy Title: **DRONE AS FIRST RESPONDER (DFR)**		Accreditation Standard:	Section 7
		Rescinds:	
Section Title: SPECIAL OPERATIONS		**Sean Case, Chief of Police**	

This Policy is for departmental use only and does not apply in any criminal or civil proceeding. This Policy should not be construed as creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims. Violations of this Policy will only form the basis for departmental administrative sanctions. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.

I. PURPOSE

To establish operational, legal, and ethical guidelines for the deployment of Drones as First Responders (DFR) in support of public safety, emergency response, and crime prevention. This policy ensures that the Anchorage Police Department's (Department) DFR program enhances officer safety, improves response times, and protects civil liberties.

II. POLICY

The DFR program differs from the Department's existing drone program. DFR involves prepositioning drones with higher level capabilities on the top of an elevated building in a protective pod (enclosure). During operational hours, these drones will be in a ready status available to respond to calls. The DFR program utilizes drones to fly to a call for service (911 or officer generated/requested) and arrive prior to, or in conjunction with, first responders on the ground. The DFR enhances the ability to evaluate the scene and circumstances, before officers arrive and while an event is ongoing, because of its elevated view. DFR provides necessary tactical information and situational awareness to help officers safely respond to incidents, de-escalate situations, and increase efficiency. It is the policy of the Department that only trained and authorized agency personnel may deploy DFR 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, images, or other data originating from or generated by the DFR, comport with the policy provisions provided herein and applicable law. Any digital multimedia evidence collected during DFR operations will be used in a manner consistent with and relevant to the authorized purpose(s). This policy shall be reviewed at least every two years for the purpose of updating DFR policies and procedures.

III. DEFINITIONS

Artificial Intelligence (AI): refers to the capability of computer systems or software to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. These tasks include reasoning, learning from experience, recognizing patterns, understanding natural language, and making decisions. AI

systems are designed to simulate cognitive functions such as perception, problem-solving, and adaptation to new information.

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

Drone as First Responder Program (DFR): A public safety initiative in which unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are autonomously or remotely deployed in response to emergency calls or incidents, often arriving at the scene before ground personnel. These programs are designed to enhance situational awareness, reduce response times, and improve officer and community safety.

FAA: An agency of the United States Department of Transportation responsible for regulating and overseeing all aspects of civil aviation. Established in 1958 and incorporated into the DOT in 1967, the FAA ensures the safety, efficiency, and environmental sustainability of air travel through the development and enforcement of aviation standards, certification of pilots and aircraft, management of U.S. airspace, and regulation of commercial space transportation.

Predictive Analytics: A branch of advanced data analysis that uses historical data, statistical algorithms, and machine learning techniques to forecast future outcomes. By identifying patterns and trends in existing datasets, predictive analytics estimates the likelihood of future events, enabling organizations to make proactive, data-driven decisions.

Real Time Crime Center (RTCC): A centralized law enforcement element that integrates live camera feeds, public safety data, and analytical technologies to provide immediate operational intelligence. It functions to support rapid response to crimes in progress, enhance situational awareness, and facilitate public safety. See *Policy 7.10 Real Time Crime Center*.

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

IV. PROCEDURE

A. Program Overview

1. DFR may be dispatched in response to any call for service, or officer requests.
2. Drones will be operated by certified personnel from designated Department facilities.
3. DFR can arrive on scene before ground units to provide live video, thermal imaging, and enhanced situational awareness.

B. Operational Objectives

1. Improving police response times.
2. Allowing the Department to be more efficient with resources – DFR may cancel the need for patrol units to respond to an incident.
3. Providing real-time information to ground officers to improve their decision–making. DFR can assist with establishing perimeters, providing additional information on potential hazards, recommended tactical positioning.
4. Assist with de-escalation of incidents – DFR will provide real-time information on whether suspects are armed, where they are located, and safe tactical options that allow officers to maximize time/space/distance.

5. Assist with locating and apprehending criminal suspects.
6. Assist with search and rescue operations.

C. General Operations

1. The DFR shall be deployed and used only to support official law enforcement and public safety missions. It will be limited to the following operational purposes:
    a. Search and Rescue: To assist missing person investigations, AMBER Alerts, Silver Alerts, and other search and rescue missions.
    b. 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).
    c. Investigatory Scene Documentation: To document a crime scene, accident scene, or other major incident scene.
    d. Missions determined to be for public safety (e.g., natural disaster, public health, or other public concerns).
    e. To provide an aerial visual perspective to assist personnel in providing direction for public safety events, traffic incident management, special circumstances, and temporary perimeter security.
    f. Mutual aid or support to other agencies that comport with this policy's provisions.
    g. For training purposes.
2. DFR will only start recording when the drone is on the scene.
3. DFR operations room staff may communicate that officers have reasonable articulable suspicion or Probable Cause for police action. DFR operations room staff frequently call complainants to gather additional information and observe crimes in progress. DFR operations room staff will communicate that information to responding officers.
4. DFR may locate suspects involved in crimes. Officers will still need to investigate and determine how to handle the incident appropriately.
5. The DFR operations room may share the live drone video feed with officers involved in the incident if needed.
6. DFR pilots will make all reasonable efforts to minimize the observations of areas that a person has an expectation of privacy.

D. Prohibited Use

1. Drones shall not be operated in an unsafe manner or in violation of FAA rules.
2. Drones shall not be equipped with weapons of any kind, nor will it be used as a weapon.
3. Under no circumstances will drones be operated and/or be under the command of anyone other than trained Department employees.

E. Staffing and Training

1. DFR will be a part of the Crime Suppression Division and located in the RTCC, reporting to the RTCC Commander.
2. Sworn and non-sworn employees may pilot DFR drones.
3. DFR pilots shall complete FAA Part 107 (remote pilot certificate) prior to engaging in any drone operations.

F. Digital Multimedia Evidence (DME) Collection

1. All Digital Multimedia Evidence (DME) shall be securely downloaded at the completion of each mission. The DFR certified pilots will record information for each file that shall include: the reason for the flight; the time, date, and location of the flight, case reference numbers or other mission identifiers, identify the DFR employee assigned in the mission, and the outcomes from the deployment reference locating the suspect/subject involved.
2. DFR employees shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute in any manner DFR DME without prior authorization and approval of the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
3. DFR recorded data will not be collected, disseminated, or retained solely for the purpose of monitoring activities protected by the US Constitution, such as the First Amendment's protections of religion, speech, press, assembly, and redress of grievances (e.g., protests, demonstrations).
4. Collection, use, dissemination, or retention of DFR recorded data shall not be based solely on individual characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, or gender), which is a violation of law.
5. Any data collected during DFR operations that is not maintained in a system of records covered by the Privacy Act shall not be disseminated by the recipient or subrecipient unless dissemination is required by law or fulfills an authorized purpose and complies with established requirements.

G. DME Retention

1. All DME shall be handled in accordance with all applicable laws and existing Department policy on data and record retention. (Department policies, *6.02 Collection and Handling of Property & Evidence* and *CJIS Disposal of Media 2.02.015*).
2. Files shall be securely stored in accordance with Municipal ordinances and regulations and Department policy, as well as state record retention laws and retained no longer than necessary for purposes of training or for use in an investigation or prosecution.
3. Data will either be stored as evidence or automatically purged after 14-days. Attaching data to a criminal case is an active process where purging the data is an automated function.

H. DME Protection

1. All data retained will be stored in a secure government digital evidence management system that include:
    a. FedRAMP Certification
    b. Encrypted Storage
    c. Robust Audit Trails
    d. Third-Party Validation
    e. Agency Controlled Access
2. All DME downloaded from a video management solution to a mobile workstation or to digital evidence storage like *Axon Evidence* shall be accessible only through a login/password protected system capable of documenting all access of information by name, date and time.
3. Only those Department employees working in an investigative or enforcement function, and authorized by the Chief of Police, shall access DME.

I. DME Access & Sharing

1. Access is restricted to authorized personnel with a legitimate law enforcement purpose.
2. DME obtained from DFR systems may be released to other authorized and verified law enforcement officials and agencies for legitimate law enforcement purposes, which includes enhancing criminal investigation and prosecution as allowed by law with approval from the Chief of Police.
3. Public access to DFR data is prohibited unless required by law or court order.

J. Privacy

1. DFRs shall not engage in observations of constitutionally protected activities (e.g., protests) unless there is a specific and credible threat to public safety or observation is requested by event organizers.
2. DFR shall conduct all operations in accordance with federal, state, and local laws
3. No information obtained by DFRs shall be used for law enforcement purposes unless (a) it is collected from areas where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy, (b) a court approved search warrant is obtained, or (c) use of the information is necessary and legally appropriate because of an immediate threat to life or safety.
4. Access to the RTCC and its systems shall be logged and subject to audit.

K. Quarterly Review

On a quarterly basis, the Chief of Police shall assess DFR operations and determine if the benefits DFR provided to law enforcement and public safety outweigh the potential legal liability and risks to citizen privacy.

L. Audit Report

1. All DFR missions will be reported on a public facing dashboard to include the following:

a. Date
b. Time
c. Type of crime
d. Duration of the flight
e. Aerial overlay of the flight path taken

2. The public-facing dashboard shall also include aggregate statistics on drone usage during First Amendment–protected events and data-sharing with outside agencies.
3. The following information will not be provided on the public dashboard:
    a. Any identifying information regarding a victim
    b. Exact address of an incident if it occurred in a residence