

	STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE State Form 39870 (R/S-06)	Reference Number SSU-007
	Subject Small Unmanned Aerial Systems (SUAS)	
	Special Instructions Replaces SSU-007 dated December 01, 2020	Effective Date January 30, 2026

I. PURPOSE

Establish guidelines for the operation, training and storage of Department owned small unmanned aerial systems.

II. POLICY

Department employees shall operate a Department owned small unmanned aerial system (SUAS) in a safe, lawful and prudent manner regardless of the employee's duty status.

SUAS shall only be operated by a department qualified operator. Employee shall not utilize a Department owned SUAS in a manner that will reflect discredit on the Department.

The decision to deploy an SUAS shall: (1) adhere to the guidelines set forth in this policy; (2) follow all applicable state and federal laws; and (3) be at the discretion of the Superintendent or their designee. An SUAS may be deployed for training and testing and evaluation by the Department.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. **APPROVED AIRCRAFT** - An aircraft that has been approved by the program coordinator and included in the Superintendent's statement of airworthiness for use in the Department's area of responsibility and in compliance with the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) issued Certificate of Authorization.

B. **CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORIZATION (COA)** - An authorization issued by the FAA Air Traffic Organization to a public operator for a specific activity. The Department shall acquire and maintain an FAA issued COA and all Department authorized qualified operators shall fly in accordance with the COA.

C. **PROGRAM COORDINATOR** - A Department representative serving as a liaison between the Department and the FAA. The program coordinator shall conduct and document initial training, monthly FAA reporting and ensure all SUAS operations are conducted in accordance with the conditions and limitations stated in the COA.

D. **QUALIFIED OPERATOR** - A sworn Department member selected and trained by the Department to fly an approved unmanned aircraft. The qualified operator is responsible for inspecting the SUAS to ensure it is in a condition for safe operation.

E. SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (SUAS) – a small unmanned aircraft and its associated elements (including communication links and the components that control the small unmanned aircraft) that are required for the safe and efficient operation of the small unmanned aircraft in the national airspace system.

F. VISUAL OBSERVER - A person designated by the qualified operator to assist with observation and avoidance of air traffic and/or objects aloft or on the ground.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Training

1. Prior to the deployment of the SUAS, an officer must first attend Department approved training, pass the FAA's Part 107 knowledge test, and obtain a Remote Pilot Certificate. Official certifications any related transcripts shall be submitted by the employee to the Training Division to retain in Acadis.

2. The training shall include, but is not limited to, the following topics:

- a. Federal Aviation Regulations regarding SUAS;
- b. FAA Form 7711-1 Certificate of Waiver/Authorization (COA);
- c. National Airspace System;
- d. Weather;
- e. SUAS Loading and Performance;
- f. Crew Resource Management;
- g. Airport / Field Operations;
- h. Radio Communications;
- i. Emergency Procedures;
- j. Preflight / Maintenance;
- k. SUAS Practical Instruction; and
- l. Any ISP Standard Operating Procedure regarding use of SUAS.

3. Qualified operators shall be allowed one (1) hour per week of SUAS proficiency training during regular duty hours so long as it does not negatively affect Department operations.

4. Documentation of all proficiency training flights shall be in accordance with section IX of this SOP.

5. Qualified operators shall undergo a yearly refresher training program established by the Department to maintain their status as a qualified operator.

a. Police employees failing to complete this annual refresher training without prior approval must submit a memorandum (through channels) to the Deputy Superintendent of the Enforcement Bureau.

b. Failure to complete any subsequent refresher training offered will result in the loss of the police employee's qualified operator status.

B. Utilization

1. A qualified operator, with the approval of the applicable Area Captain or their designee, may be allowed to use a SUAS in compliance with all FAA requirements and guidelines, including the COA or Waiver from the FAA, as well as any other applicable law, under the following circumstances, to include, but not limited to:

- a. Crash investigation purposes;
- b. Public safety, to include crowd control, critical incident oversight or event security;
- c. Monitoring crowds on public property, searching for people or objects within the law;
- d. Natural disaster scene surveys;
- e. Locating missing persons and property;
- f. Tactical support to include pre-deployment reconnaissance, locate fleeing suspects, crisis de-escalation, active shooter situations, search of structures, etc.;
- g. To aid a criminal investigation, such as with scene photography of evidence gathering;
- h. Department related recruiting events approved by Command.

2. Indiana Code 35-33-5-9: Unmanned aerial vehicles; search warrant; exceptions

a. A law enforcement officer must obtain a search warrant in order to use an unmanned aerial vehicle:

- (i) on or over private property; or
- (ii) to conduct a search, perform surveillance, obtain a photograph or obtain video of private property or of individuals, items or structures located on private property; without the consent of the owner of the affected private property

b. A search warrant is not required for a use of an unmanned aerial vehicle if a warrant would not be required for a search not using an unmanned aerial vehicle.

C. Flight Operations

1. All flights shall comply with the Certificate of Authorization (COA) issued to the Department, within the parameters of applicable Indiana state laws, and all FAA policies concerning SUAS utilization.

2. The qualified operator shall keep a copy of the FAA COA with them all times of utilization of the SUAS, including training.

3. The qualified operator conducting a flight under the purview of the FAA will, at all times, have a visual observer to assist in the operation of the SUAS. Contact with the qualified operator and the visual observer shall be mandatory for the entire duration of the flight.

4. The qualified operator shall immediately notify the Regional or District Duty Officer of all SUAS deployments. The Regional or District Duty Officer shall be responsible for notifying the Operations Center. Usage during exigent circumstances shall be made as soon as practical.

5. Multiple SUAS's may not be deployed in a small geographical area at the same time without

first coordinating and defining the parameters of the area where each deployed SUAS will be operated.

6. Prior to a SUAS deployment, a qualified operator shall:

a. Conduct an assessment of the operating environment. The assessment must include the following:

- (i) Local weather conditions;
- (ii) Local airspace and any flight restrictions;
- (iii) The location of persons and property on the surface;
- (iv) Other ground hazards.

b. Ensure all persons directly participating in the SUAS operation are informed about the following:

- (i) Operating conditions;
- (ii) Emergency procedures;
- (iii) Contingency procedures;
- (iv) Roles and responsibilities of each person involved in the operation;
- (v) Potential hazards.

3. Ensure all control links between the control system and the SUAS are working properly.

4. Ensure there is sufficient power to continue controlled flight operations to a normal landing.

5. Ensure any object attached or carried by the SUAS is secure and does not adversely affect the flight characteristics or controllability of the aircraft.

6. Ensure all necessary documentation is available for inspection, including the aircraft registration (if required), and COA (if applicable).

7. A SUAS deployed within a covered structure does not fall under the purview of the FAA requirements and guidelines, however the qualified operator shall follow all applicable procedures listed in VII.E.1-6.

8. Night Time Operations

a. All operations under the approved COA must use one or more visual observers;

b. Prior to conducting operations that are the subject of the COA, the qualified operator and visual observer must be trained to recognize and overcome visual illusions caused by darkness, and understand physiological conditions which may degrade night vision. This training must be documented and must be presented for inspection upon request from the Administrator or an authorized representative; and

c. The SUAS must be equipped with lighted anti-collision lighting visible from a distance of no less than three (3) statute miles. The intensity of the anti-collision lighting may be reduced if, because of operating conditions, it would be in the interest of safety to do so. Additionally, in

order to comply with FAA Regulation 14 CFR § 91.209, the aircraft must have position lighting that enables determination of location altitude, attitude and direction of flight.

D. Emergency/Contingency Procedures

1. All SUAS owned, operated, or deployed by the Department must have an automatic return-to-home feature activated.

2. In the event of a lost link, the qualified operator will comply with the following provisions:

a. The SUAS lost link will be programmed to ensure that lost link flight does not fly over persons and the landing location is within the view of the qualified operator.

b. Rally and home locations will be programmed to remain within the area defined in the FAA Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) where flight operations are being conducted.

c. Lost link procedures will not transit or orbit over populated areas, Victor airways or busy roadways/interstate highways.

d. Lost link procedures will be programmed to remain within the operations area and altitude, avoid unexpected turn-around and/or altitude changes, and will provide sufficient time to communicate with air traffic control if necessary.

3. Emergency/Fly-Away Procedures:

a. In the event of an emergency, the qualified operator will immediately contact the air traffic control facility having jurisdiction for the airspace, state the nature of emergency and pilot intentions.

b. In the event of a SUAS fly-away, advise air traffic control of the following:

- (i) Direction of flight;
- (ii) Last known altitude; and
- (iii) Maximum remaining flight time.

4. Loss of Communications between the Qualified Operator and Air Traffic Control

a. If required, the qualified operator will communicate with air traffic control through use of two way radio communications or a cellular phone based on the agreement between air traffic control and the qualified operator.

b. In the event the qualified operator is unable to establish communications, the qualified operator will immediately land the SUAS until communications can be regained. In all cases, during Loss of Communications, there is concern for people or property in the air or on the ground the qualified operator will immediately land the aircraft.

5. Loss of Communications between the Visual Observer and the Qualified Operator

a. The qualified operator and visual observer will be collocated during operations for this COA

and communications will be through direct communication. However, if the observer and the qualified operator are not collocated where verbal communication is not possible, the following communication tools will be utilized:

- (i) Hand held Police radio
- (ii) Cellular phone
- (iii) Hand Signals (may be used solely or in conjunction with the communication equipment)

6. If communication is lost and cannot be re-established the SUAS will immediately land.

7. Incidents of lost signal or communications must be documented and reported to the FAA in accordance with the current COA.

E. Flight Documentation

1. All SUAS deployments, regardless of incident type, shall be documented in a CAD card. If no existing CAD card is open for the incident, a CAD card shall be created.

2. Training or proficiency flights shall also be documented in this manner.

3. The following information shall be entered into a CAD card:

- a. Location of deployment;
- b. Reason for deployment;
- c. Deployment time;
- d. Landing time;
- e. Qualified Operator name and PE;
- f. Visual Observer name and PE;
- g. Maximum altitude flown;
- h. Operation Center notification:
- i. Time notified;
- j. Name and PE of RDO/DDO making the notification;
- k. Any incident of damage to a SUAS or other property.

4. All SUAS deployments shall be documented in an RMS report via a supplemental report. If no existing RMS report has been generated, one will be created to document the Department's activities.

5. The following information shall be documented in the RMS report:

- a. Location of deployment;
- b. Reason for deployment;
- c. Deployment time;
- d. Landing time;
- e. Qualified Operator name and PE;
- f. Visual Observer name and PE;
- g. Maximum altitude flown;
- h. Operation Center notification:
- i. Time notified;
- j. Name and PE of RDO/DDO making the notification;

- k. Any incident of damage to a SUAS or other property.
- l. Whether or not a search warrant was obtained for the deployment and the name of the agency which sought the search warrant.
- 6. Qualified operators shall complete the approved Department deployment log to document all uses of a SUAS to include training flights.
 - a. This log is to be maintained by the employee for an indefinite period of time.

F. Other Requirements related to SUAS

- 1. All photographs or videos obtained as a result of a SUAS deployment shall be submitted in accordance with [CIS-017](#).
 - 2. Qualified operators are prohibited from altering or modifying a SUAS from the manufactures original design (e.g. adding stickers) without written approval of the Superintendent or designee.
 - 3. A qualified operator intentionally using the SUAS without proper authorization or in deviation of the standards set forth in this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action.
 - 4. The proper care and maintenance of SUAS equipment shall be the responsibility of the Department employee to which the SUAS equipment is assigned.
 - 5. SUAS equipment shall not be kept in a commission for an extended period of time unless the commission is parked in a secure location.
- G. This procedure is to be used in conjunction with all other relevant rules, directives, procedures and policies.