



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
POLICIES & PROCEDURES**



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**SUBJECT: STATE POLICE UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS**

**1.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards and procedures for the application, utilization, authorized use and operational guidelines for the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program.

**2.0 POLICY**

It is the policy of the Department of Public Safety to embrace new technologies that advance the capabilities of the department to protect and serve the public. This policy is designed to minimize risk to the public, property, and Department of Public Safety personnel during the operation of UAS while continuing to safeguard the right of privacy of the public.

**3.0 APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to all commissioned New Mexico State Police personnel of the New Mexico Department of Public Safety.

**4.0 REFERENCES**

- A. FAA Order 8900.1 Volume 16 Unmanned Aircraft Systems**
- B. Federal Aviation Regulations, 14 CFR Part 61**
- C. Federal Aviation Regulations, 14 CFR Part 91**
- D. Federal Aviation Regulations, 14 CFR Part 107**

**5.0 DEFINITIONS**

- A. Certificate of Authorization (COA)** – COA is an authorization issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to a public operator for a specific UAS.
- B. Defined Incident Perimeter** – A defined perimeter to be determined based on the scope of the operation and a defined operational ceiling at or below four hundred (400) feet Above Ground Level (AGL).
- C. Night Flight** – Flight of a UAS that occurs between one half (1/2) hour after sunset and one half (1/2) hour before sunrise. The time of sunset and sunrise are determined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- D. Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC)** – The individual responsible for the overall flight operations for a specific mission. The RPIC has the final responsibility for all aspects of the mission to include safety.
- E. Program Coordinator (PC)** – the PC is the Special Operations Bureau Commander. The PC is responsible for the administrative functions related to the UAS program, including maintaining a current list of all UAS team members. The PC is also responsible for the condition, maintenance, and flight records of the UAS and associated equipment.

- F. Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS)** – An aircraft without a human pilot on board. Its flight is controlled either autonomously by computers on board the vehicle or under the remote control of a pilot.
- G. Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Commander** – An officer within the Department of Public Safety designated by the Chief.
- H. Visual Observer** – A person who is designated by the RPIC to assist the remote RPIC and the person manipulating the flight controls of the UAS to supplement situational awareness and Visual Line of Sight (VLOS), assisting with seeing and avoiding other air traffic or objects aloft or on the ground.
- I. Official Law Enforcement and Public Safety Mission** – Any event, function or operation which is sponsored, sanctioned or approved by the New Mexico Department of Public Safety.

### 6.0 PROCEDURE

#### A. Activation

All UAS mission requests shall be authorized by a district or section commander or designee and then forwarded to the Special Operations Bureau Commander (PC) or his/her designee for approval. Once a mission is approved, the UAS commander will assign a RPIC to the mission. All missions will be flown in accordance with the FAA regulations 14 CFR Parts 61, 91, COA or FAA Part 107. This agency has adopted the use of UAS to provide an aerial visual perspective in responding to emergency situations and exigent circumstances, and for the following objectives:

1. **Situational Awareness:** To assist decision makers (e.g., incident command staff; first responders; city, county, and state officials) in understanding the nature, scale, and scope of an incident—and for planning and coordinating an effective response;
2. **Search and Rescue:** To assist missing person investigations, AMBER Alerts, Silver Alerts, and other search and rescue missions;
3. **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);
4. **Visual Perspective:** To provide an aerial visual perspective to assist officers in traffic incident management, and temporary perimeter security; and/or
5. **Scene Documentation:** To document a crime scene, crash scene, or other major incident scene (e.g., disaster management, incident response, large-scale forensic scene investigation).

#### B. Operations

1. The agency must obtain applicable authorizations, permits, or certificates required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prior to deploying or operating the UAS, and these authorizations, permits, and certificates shall be maintained and current.
2. The UAS will be operated only by personnel (remote pilots) who have been trained in the operation of the system.

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3. The RPIC shall inspect and test UAS equipment prior to each deployment to verify the proper functioning of all equipment and the airworthiness of the device.
4. The UAS equipment is the responsibility of the RPIC and will be used with reasonable care to ensure proper functioning. Equipment malfunctions shall be brought to the attention of the UAS Commander as soon as possible so that an appropriate repair can be made or a replacement unit can be procured.
5. All flights will be documented on a form or database designed for that purpose, and all flight time shall be accurately recorded. In addition, each deployment of the UAS shall include information regarding the reason for the flight; the time, date, and location of the flight; the name of the supervisor approving the deployment, name of the RPIC, and a summary of the activities covered, actions taken, and outcomes from the deployment.
6. Except for those instances where officer safety or investigation could be jeopardized—and where reasonably possible and practical notification should be made to the public.
7. Where there are specific and articulable grounds to believe that the UAS will collect evidence of criminal wrongdoing and/or if the UAS will be used in a manner that may intrude upon reasonable expectations of privacy, the agency will obtain a search warrant prior to conducting the flight.
8. The UAS shall be deployed and used only to support official law enforcement and public safety missions or for department approved UAS training.
9. The UAS shall not be operated in an unsafe manner or in violation of FAA rules.
10. The UAS shall not be equipped with weapons of any kind.
11. The UAS Commander and the Special Operations Bureau Commander (PC) shall approve any payload used on a UAS.
12. The UAS shall not be used for routine observation of the public at large.
13. The UAS shall not be used for surveilling or “spying” on the public (without a warrant).
14. The UAS shall not be used in flights over populated areas, except in response to emergencies outlined below.
15. Pre-Flight Briefing - A briefing led by the RPIC, and to include the observer, will be conducted prior to aircraft launch. This briefing includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. Review of the missions goals and expected outcomes;
  - b. Review of current and forecasted weather conditions;
  - c. Review of current Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) and Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) that have been issued for the proposed flight area;
  - d. Identification of mission limitations and safety issues such as battery charge, GPS signal strength, and potential for radio interference;

- e. Review of proposed flight area to include surrounding airspace and any obstructions that are present;
  - f. Review of communication procedures between RPIC, observer, and other personnel used to support the mission. This includes verifying phone numbers and radio frequencies used to communicate with Air Traffic Control in the event of a fly-away or other flight emergency when operating in controlled airspace;
  - g. Review of emergency/contingency procedures including aircraft system failure, flight termination, diversion, lost link procedures, and lost communications with ATC if applicable; and/or
  - h. Execution of a pre-flight check utilizing the approved checklist.
16. UAS Observer

In the event an observer is required, the RPIC on-scene will assign an observer from available on-scene personnel. All training and mission details will be provided to the selected observer at the time of the mission.

### **C. Selection, Qualification, Training, and Dismissal**

#### 1. Selection

- a. All applicants must have a minimum of two (2) years patrol experience and have successfully completed the department FTO program. Patrol experience may include time spent in patrol with other agencies prior to becoming a commissioned State Police officer
- b. Must have a written letter of support from his/her commander;
- c. Must provide his/her last two (2) completed annual evaluations, if applicable;
- d. Must submit a resume that includes any UAS experience;
- e. Must participate in an oral interview; and
- f. Remote Pilot Training Requirements

#### 2. Qualification

Remote Pilot Mission Eligibility – All members assigned to UAS Team shall have, at a minimum, completed FAA Part 107 remote pilot certificate, conducted one hundred (100) flights, and twenty (20) flight hours. All remote pilots must be able to show proficiency in specific core competencies in all UAS controls and operating systems in accordance with FAA and COA regulations before being approved to fly missions.

#### 3. Training

All personnel will attend in-service training, as well as specialized training outside the department as allowed by budgetary constraints.

- a. Initial Training – All personnel selected to be a member of the UAS team that will be flying missions shall receive department approved training. The remote pilots will have a current working knowledge of the airspace intended for operations, Air Traffic Control communication requirements, specific UAS aerodynamic

factors, UAS limitations, emergency procedures, and the ability to obtain and interpret weather information. All remote pilots shall be familiar and proficient with the role and functions of an observer. All training will be documented on the proper forms.

- b. Proficiency Training – In order to maintain proficiency, all remote pilots shall conduct at least one (1) flight each month to include safe take-off and landings. All flights, to include training flights, shall be documented on a UAS flight report. Remote Pilot proficiency training is not limited to actual remote pilot skills, but also includes knowledge of all pertinent UAS related matters and understanding of current COA guidelines. Members who do not have documented training or flight time for the preceding sixty (60) days shall demonstrate proficiency before performing remote pilot duties during a mission. This training shall include a minimum of one (1) hour of ground instruction and flight time, including making three (3) ten (10) minute flights to demonstrate proficiency. Failure to maintain and prove proficiency will result in removal from UAS team.
- c. Annual Training – Each remote pilot must attend in-service training once a year to include updated industry standards and field exercises, as well as a review of current case law governing the use of UAS, and FAA regulations pertaining to the operation of UAS as designated by the Special Operations Bureau Commander (PC).

#### 4. Dismissal

Membership and participation as a part of the team considered a privilege not a promotion. To maintain team integrity and the highest level of standards, all members are subject to disciplinary action, and may be removed from the team, without cause, by the Chief of the State Police. Reasons for removal or suspension from the team include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Failure to attend special assignments;
- ii. Failure to attend training unless excused;
- iii. Failure to pass a certification or re-certification course;
- iv. Failure to maintain an FAA Part 107 certification;
- v. Failure to maintain team standards; and/or
- vi. Failure to meet district duties and responsibilities

#### D. Uniforms

Refer to department policy *ADM: 24 State Police Uniforms*, for the uniform designated for team members.

#### E. Equipment - Maintenance

It is the goal of the team to keep equipment in a constant state of readiness and to be accountable for all issued equipment. UAS maintenance is the responsibility of the UAS Commander in accordance to manufacturer's recommendations. Any maintenance discrepancies with a UAS will be reported by the RPIC to the UAS Commander

