PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT MANUAL OF GENERAL ORDERS			
General Order: 25.02 *(formerly 21.07)*	**Effective: 10/13/2026**	**Supersedes: 08/19/2021**	**Number of Pages: 5**
STRATEGIC ANALYSIS BUREAU: SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS			

A. Purpose

The purpose of this General Order is to establish policy to govern the safe, effective, and lawful operation of small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS), commonly referred to as "drones," by personnel of the Prince William County Police Department (PWCPD). Polices and procedures contained in this document are intended to assure transparency in the PWCPD's use of sUAS, to increase the safety of the public and sUAS operators, and to protect the legal rights of the public.

B. Policy

It is the policy of the PWCPD that the sUAS shall be used only as set forth in this General Order. When utilizing a sUAS, PWCPD members shall consider overall public safety, as well as the privacy and legal rights of individual citizens.

C. Legal Authority

1. Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) use is regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration through the authority granted by Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulation (14 CFR) Part 107.
2. Further, Virginia Code §19.2-60.1 regulates the use of UAS by public bodies in the Commonwealth.
3. Virginia Code §18.2-121.3 regulates UAS use generally.

D. Objectives

1. It shall be the mission of those members of the PWCPD who are trained in the use of sUAS, to use this resource to protect the lives and property of citizens and first responders in a constitutional, legal, and safe manner. sUAS can support first responders by detecting possible dangers that could not otherwise be seen. Additionally, the sUAS has suitable uses in locating and apprehending subjects, missing persons, search and rescue operations, etc.
2. While using a sUAS, PWCPD members shall comply with the United States and Virginia Constitutions, and all federal and State laws and regulations, including all FAA Regulations for flights, and receive the proper authorization for each flight. It shall be the intent of every sUAS operator to ensure the protection of civil rights and make reasonable

efforts to not invade a person's reasonable expectation of privacy when operating the sUAS.

E. Definitions

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

2. Unmanned Aircraft (UA): An aircraft that is intended to navigate in the air without an on-board pilot.

3. Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS): An UA weighing less than 55 pounds on takeoff, including its associated elements, communication links, and the components that control the unmanned aircraft that are required for the safe and efficient operation of the UA.

4. Remote Pilot in Command (PIC): A person designated before and during the flight of a sUAS who is directly responsible for and is the final authority as to the operation of the sUAS. The PIC is either directly in control of the sUAS or has the immediate ability to take control of the sUAS .

5. Visual Observer (VO): A person who is designated by the PIC to assist seeing and avoiding other air traffic or objects aloft or on the ground.

6. 14 CFR Part 107: Part of the Code of Federal Regulations that allows for routine civil operation of sUAS in the National Airspace System (NAS) and provides safety rules for those operations.

F. sUAS Unit Administration and Supervision

1. The sUAS Unit shall be assigned to the Strategic Analysis Bureau and report to that Commander.

2. The sUAS Unit shall consist of a coordinator and a team of PICs, VOs, and any necessary and/or appropriate support personnel.

3. PICs shall be certified as remote pilots under 14 CFR Part 107. PICs shall undergo, receive, and maintain all training, certifications, and licenses required under federal and Virginia laws and regulations.

4. PICs are solely responsible for the safe operation of the sUAS, as well as all pre- and post-flight airworthiness inspections of all components of sUAS.

5. The sUAS Unit shall maintain written administrative and operational Standard Operating Procedures that comply with this and all other General Orders, United States and Virginia Constitutions, FAA and other federal laws, regulations, and requirements, and Virginia laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, Virginia Code § 19.2-60.1.

6. The sUAS Unit shall conduct monthly training.

G. sUAS Deployment Procedures

1. sUAS shall only be utilized by PWCPD members (i) as permitted during the execution of a valid search warrant, or (ii) in accordance with the exceptions in Virginia Code § 19.2-60.1. All sUAS use shall comply with the United States and Virginia Constitutions, federal and state laws and regulations, this General Order, and the PWCPD Standard Operating Procedures.

2. Pursuant to Virginia Code § 19.2-60.1, sUAS may be deployed without a search warrant for the following circumstances:

   a. Amber Alert

   b. Senior Alert

   c. Blue Alert

   d. Where use of an unmanned aircraft system is determined necessary to alleviate an immediate danger to any person.

      1. Examples of "immediate danger" may include, but are not limited to:

         i. Missing and endangered person(s), based on, but not limited to, age; physical, medical, mental, emotional, and/or; circumstances of disappearance; and/or individual(s) who the missing person is, or is believed to be, accompanying or accompanied by;

         ii. Suicidal and/or homicidal person(s);

         iii. Barricaded person(s);

         iv. Person(s) who are considered armed and/or dangerous;

         v. Active violence incidents;

         vi. Suspicious packages and/or any package, device, vehicle, or structure suspected of containing explosives or other dangerous or hazardous substances or materials; and

         vii. Person(s) who is / are a harm to self or others.

e. By a law enforcement officer to survey the scene of a motor vehicle crash, when a report is required pursuant to Virginia Code § 46.2-373, for the purpose of crash reconstruction and to record the scene by photographic or video images.

f. By a law enforcement officer to aerially survey a primary residence of the subject of the arrest warrant to formulate a plan to execute an existing arrest warrant or capias for a felony offense; or,

g. By a law enforcement officer to locate a person sought for arrest when such person has fled from a law enforcement officer and a law enforcement officer remains in hot pursuit of such person.

h. By the Department of Transportation when assisting a law enforcement officer to prepare a report pursuant to Virginia Code § 46.2-373;

i. For training exercises related to such uses; or

j. If a person with legal authority consents to the warrantless search;

The search warrant requirements of Virginia Code § 19.2-60.1 shall not apply when an sUAS is utilized to support the Commonwealth of Virginia or any locality for purposes other than law enforcement, including damage assessment, traffic assessment, flood stage assessment, and wildfire assessment.

3. sUAS shall not be used for:

a. Any law enforcement or public safety operations which are not covered in this General Order;

b. Patrolling through airspace unrelated to an approved, specific sUAS mission;

c. Surveillance without appropriate legal authority; and

d. Any purpose when the PWCPD determines that the use of the sUAS would threaten the health, safety, or welfare of any member of the PWCPD or the public.

4. At no time will a weaponized sUAS be deployed in the Commonwealth of Virginia or its use facilitated by the PWCPD.

H. Digital Media Evidence Retention and Access

1. All sUAS missions, or parts thereof, that involve monitoring members engaged in the following activities shall be recorded:

a. Enforcement encounters when under the circumstances there is a reasonable suspicion that criminal activity or a violation of law is occurring or is likely to occur.

b. Calls for service which, under the circumstances known to the member at the time suggest a threat to the safety of any individual and/or reports of a crime(s) in

progress. Absent additional factors, this does not include Search and Rescue operations.

c. Traffic and pedestrian stops

d. Vehicle and foot pursuits

e. Taking persons into custody

f. Execution of any search or arrest warrant

g. Response to resistance

h. Any situation the PIC believes is likely to be adversarial in nature

2. sUAS missions, or parts, thereof, that are likely to be of evidentiary value in a criminal investigation shall be recorded.

3. The Department's sUAS do not provide the same buffer functionality as the BWC. In the event recording is not enabled prior to any of the above occurring the PIC will start recording as soon as it is reasonable, practical, and safe to do so.

4. sUAS training missions, portions of missions consisting of navigation to the scene of the above activities, or other portions of missions determined inappropriate or unnecessary by the Incident Commander are not required to be recorded.

5. Digital Media Evidence shall be retained and categorized consistent with the Body-Worn Camera policy as documented in General Order 28.11 BODY-WORN CAMERA.

I. Interpretation of this General Order

The Chief of Police shall be the final authority on all matters of interpretation and application of this General Order.