


STRATFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT 	Type of Directive: Policy and Procedure	Updated: NEW
	Title: Drone/Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) Policy	No. 7.27
	Issuing Authority: Chief Joseph McNeil	Issued: 4/23/2025
	Reference:	

1. PURPOSE: The use of small, unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) to support law enforcement operations has become widely accepted as a potential low-cost alternative to traditional aviation programs.

2. POLICY: It is the policy of this agency that sUAS shall be deployed only for specific public safety missions, in compliance with all applicable laws, and only by trained and authorized personnel. This policy is not intended to be all inclusive, but instead shall serve as a supplement to other agency policies and procedures, applicable national aviation authority regulations, and sUAS manufacturers' approved flight manuals. The objective of the sUAS program is to provide agency personnel with a force-multiplier resource to assist them with the types of incidents where sUAS would be an advantage in a search, reconnaissance or surveillance type operation.

3. PROCEDURE: A. The Patrol Captain is designated as the UAS Coordinator and is responsible for oversight of the program in conformance with all agency directives.

2. The Patrol Captain along with the sUAS operators will assure that all FAA requirements are met including but not limited to:

- a. 14 USC 107 registration and exemption applications;
- b. Flight Authorization applications;
- c. Review the FAA Aviation safety program with all operators; and
- d. Maintaining pilot certifications

3. The Patrol Captain will provide an annual report to the Chief of Police and designated agency personnel outlining all incidents where the sUAS was used and any recommendations for program enhancements or policy changes. The annual report will include:

- a. Number of missions and a brief summary of the reasons for use;
- b. A review of the appropriateness of uses;
- c. Any safety or equipment concerns;
- d. A roster of certified personnel; and
- e. Flight time, to include a review of flight logs or data from the drone's flight time counters

4. The Patrol Captain will assign a certified operator to oversee maintenance and care for the drone. Any damage or repair needs will be documented and forwarded to the Patrol Captain for further action.

5. The Patrol Captain will maintain a list of authorized equipment for the drone. Only authorized, department issued equipment will be carried on the drone.

B. Personnel Qualifications and Training

1. Agency drones will only be operated by personnel who have completed all required training and certification. An employee may operate the drone without certification for training purposes, but only under the guidance of a trained and certified operator/instructor.

2. All sUAS program personnel shall receive FAA and agency approved training necessary to safely, efficiently, and effectively manage or operate sUAS, to include initial and recurrent training.

3. All sUAS operators shall hold the appropriate FAA credentials and any additional credentials as determined by the Patrol Captain.

4. All sUAS program personnel shall receive training in the legal aspects of sUAS use.

5. All sUAS program personnel shall receive annual training on the policies and procedures governing the use of the equipment

6. The Training Officer is responsible for maintaining and updating all records of training and certifications and sUAS personnel will assure any such training and certifications are forwarded to the Training Officer.

C. Operational Procedures

1. Agency personnel will only use SPD drones unless specifically authorized by the Patrol Captain. All agency drones will be marked and registered with the FAA.

2. Agency sUAS operations shall comply with guidelines from the applicable national aviation authority and any Connecticut regulations.

3. All sUAS missions must be approved by a Shift Commander. Supervisory personnel should monitor all deployments and uses of sUAS to ensure that officers equipped with sUAS devices utilize them in accordance with policy and procedures defined herein.

4. The Patrol Captain will be notified when a sUAS was deployed and the result of the deployment. This can be done by text or e-mail.

5. All flights shall be documented on the sUAS flight form and all flight time shall be accurately recorded. In addition, each deployment of the sUAS shall include:

a. The reason for the flight;

b. The time, date, and location of the flight;

c. The names of the supervisor approving the deployment, the sUAS operator and any other staff assigned; and

d. A summary of the activities covered, actions taken, and outcomes from the deployment.

5. Where there are grounds to believe that the sUAS may collect evidence of criminal wrongdoing and the sUAS shall be used in a manner that may intrude upon reasonable expectations of privacy, the agency shall obtain a search warrant prior to conducting the flight.

6. Approved operational uses of the sUAS include:

a. Emergency conditions or events requiring situational awareness;

b. Search and rescue;

c. Tactical deployment;

d. Incident scene documentation (crime, traffic crash, disaster)

e. Evidence collection and surveillance;

f. Tracking escapees;

g. Crowd control and monitoring dangerous situations; and

h. Other documented uses that have a law enforcement purpose

7. Prohibited uses of the sUAS include:

a. Random surveillance that has no public safety purpose;

d. Targeting a person based solely on characteristics that would violate the agency's Bias-Based policing standards; and

e. Drones will not be weaponized

8. During any sUAS operation one person will be identified as the **“Remote Pilot in Command” (RPIC)**. The RPIC is responsible for assuring that all sUAS operations are carried out in conformance with this policy and the RPIC’s training.

9. If an accident occurs, the sUAS operator is responsible for completing a report documenting the accident, notifying the Patrol Captain and assuring the FAA is notified within 10 days of the incident.

D. Data Retention and Management

1. All Data captured, recorded, or otherwise produced by the equipment is the sole property of the agency.

2. Data and images that may be regarded as evidence will be downloaded and secured in accordance with SPD Policy

3. All data shall be securely downloaded at the completion of each mission. The sUAS RPIC shall record information for each file that shall include the date, time, location, and case reference numbers or other mission identifiers and those agency personnel involved in mission.

4. Agency employees shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute DME in any manner without prior authorization from the appropriate designated personnel.

5. All access to sUAS data shall be specifically authorized by agency policy, and all access is to be audited to ensure that only authorized users are accessing the data and only for legitimate and authorized purposes.

6. Files should be securely stored in accordance with agency policy and appropriate records retention laws and retained no longer than necessary for purposes of training or for use in an investigation or prosecution.

7. Data may be shared with other governmental agencies where there is a legitimate public safety purpose and the request has been approved by the UAS Coordinator.

8. Any media requests or requests from the public for DME must be approved by the Records Lieutenant before release.

E. Complaints Related to sUAS Operations

1. Any complaints made concerning the use of the sUAS will be handled in conformance with our Citizen Complaint Policy

2. The Chief of Police and Patrol Captain will be notified of any complaints concerning sUAS operations as soon as practicable.

3. Unauthorized or inappropriate use of an sUAS will be investigated in accordance with Disciplinary Policy.

