
Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Operations

606.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines under which unmanned aerial systems (UAS) may be used, and the storage, retrieval and dissemination of images and data captured by such systems.

606.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) - An unmanned aircraft or drone of any type that is capable of sustaining directed flight, whether tethered, preprogrammed or remotely controlled (commonly referred to as an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)), and all of the supporting or attached systems designed for gathering information through imaging, recording or any other means.

Pilot - A member of the Department licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration, who has completed required training, and is authorized by the Chief of Police to operate a UAS.

606.2 POLICY

Unmanned aerial systems may be utilized to enhance the department's mission of protecting lives and property when other means and resources are not available or are less effective. Any use of a UAS will be in strict accordance with constitutional and privacy rights and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations.

606.3 PRIVACY

The use of the UAS potentially involves privacy considerations. Absent a warrant or exigent circumstances, operators and observers shall adhere to FAA altitude regulations and shall not intentionally record or transmit images of any location where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy (e.g., residence, yard, enclosure). Operators and observers shall take reasonable precautions to avoid inadvertently recording or transmitting images of areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy. Reasonable precautions can include, for example, deactivating or turning imaging devices away from such areas or persons during UAS operations.

606.4 PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The Chief of Police will appoint a program coordinator who will be responsible for the management of the UAS program. The program coordinator will ensure that policies and procedures conform to current laws, regulations and best practices and will have the following additional responsibilities:

- Coordinating the FAA Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) application process and ensuring that the COA is current.
- Ensuring that all authorized operators and required observers have completed all required FAA and department-approved training in the operation, applicable laws, policies and procedures regarding use of the UAS.

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- Developing uniform protocol for submission and evaluation of requests to deploy a UAS, including urgent requests made during ongoing or emerging incidents. Deployment of a UAS shall require written authorization of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee, depending on the type of mission.
- Developing protocol for conducting criminal investigations involving a UAS, including documentation of time spent monitoring a subject.
- Developing an operational protocol governing the deployment and operation of a UAS including, but not limited to, safety oversight, use of visual observers, establishment of lost link procedures and secure communication with air traffic control facilities.
- Developing a protocol for fully documenting all missions.
- Developing a UAS inspection, maintenance and record-keeping protocol to ensure continuing airworthiness of a UAS, up to and including its overhaul or life limits.
- Developing protocols to ensure that all data intended to be used as evidence are accessed, maintained, stored and retrieved in a manner that ensures its integrity as evidence, including strict adherence to chain of custody requirements. Electronic trails, including encryption, authenticity certificates and date and time stamping, shall be used as appropriate to preserve individual rights and to ensure the authenticity and maintenance of a secure evidentiary chain of custody.
- Developing protocols that ensure retention and purge periods are maintained in accordance with established records retention schedules.
- Facilitating law enforcement access to images and data captured by the UAS.
- Recommending program enhancements, especially regarding safety and information security.
- Ensuring that established protocols are followed by monitoring and providing periodic program reports to the Chief of Police.

606.5 USE OF UAS

Only licensed pilots who have completed the required training and are authorized by the Chief of Police shall be permitted to operate a UAS on, above or around Metra property; or in furtherance of other authorized law enforcement mission.

Use of vision enhancement technology (e.g., thermal and other imaging equipment not generally available to the public) is permissible in viewing areas only where there is no protectable privacy interest or when in compliance with a search warrant or court order. In all other instances, legal counsel should be consulted.

UAS operations should generally be conducted during daylight hours and a UAS should not be flown over populated areas without FAA approval.

The UAS, or images and data produced by its use are and shall remain the property of Metra and shall not be transferred or used for personal business of any type. Any use of the UAS that

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is not specifically related to the operation or mission of this department shall require the express authorization of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

MPD UAS may be flown by authorized department operators for the purpose(s) of pilot practice, training, or flight demonstrations.

A Metra UAS may be flown by department pilots for airborne photography, video and/or data collection in support of other units/divisions of the Agency.

The Metra Police Department may not use the UAS to gather information except (725 ILCS 167/15):

- (a) To counter a high risk of a terrorist attack by a specific individual or organization if the United States Secretary of Homeland Security determines that credible intelligence indicates there is a risk.
- (b) Pursuant to a search warrant based on probable cause. The warrant must be limited to a period of 45 days, renewable by a judge upon showing good cause for subsequent periods of 45 days.
- (c) Upon reasonable suspicion that under particular circumstances, swift action is needed to prevent imminent harm to life, forestall the imminent escape of a suspect or prevent the destruction of evidence. The use of a UAS under this paragraph is limited to a period of 48 hours. Within 24 hours of UAS initiation under this paragraph, the Chief of Police must report its use, in writing, to the State's Attorney.
- (d) To locate a missing person while not also undertaking a criminal investigation.
- (e) To obtain crime scene and crash scene photography in a geographically confined and time-limited manner. The use of the UAS under this paragraph on private property requires either a search warrant or lawful consent to search.
- (f) To obtain information necessary for the determination of whether a disaster or public health emergency should be declared, to manage a disaster by monitoring weather or emergency conditions, to survey damage, or to coordinate response and recovery efforts.

606.5.1 PRIVATE UAS OWNERS

This policy and its restrictions apply to the department's directed use of a UAS owned by a private third party and information gathered by a UAS voluntarily submitted to the Department by a private third party (725 ILCS 167/40).

A privately owned or held UAS may not be flown by a department member on, above or around Metra property.

606.6 PROHIBITED USE

The UAS video surveillance equipment shall not be used:

- To conduct random surveillance activities.

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- To target a person based solely on actual or perceived characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, economic status, age, cultural group, or disability.
- To harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.
- To conduct personal business of any type.

The UAS shall not be weaponized.

606.7 RETENTION AND DISCLOSURE OF UAS INFORMATION

Within 30 days of UAS use, the Records Section supervisor shall destroy all information gathered by the UAS except when there is reasonable suspicion that the information contains evidence of criminal activity, or the information is relevant to an ongoing investigation or pending criminal trial (725 ILCS 167/20).

The disclosure of information gathered by the UAS is prohibited except to another government agency when there is reasonable suspicion that the information contains evidence of criminal activity, or the information is relevant to an ongoing investigation or pending criminal trial (725 ILCS 167/25).

606.8 REPORTING

The Records Section supervisor shall report annually, by April 1, to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority the number of UAS's owned by the Metra Police Department (725 ILCS 167/35).