



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



**Unmanned Aircraft Systems**

Eff. Date 02/03/2025

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the usage of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) as authorized by the Chief of Police.

**Mission**

The Madison Police Department's Unmanned Aircraft Systems Unit shall support department operations by providing aerial observation of law enforcement and other public safety incidents. Missions will be accomplished efficiently and safely while respecting the law and the privacy of the community members we serve.

**MPD UAS Operations**

Madison Police Department UAS devices may only be utilized under the following circumstances:

- To assist in search and rescue operations.
- To provide aerial documentation of crime scenes.
- To provide aerial surveillance of damage caused by natural or manmade events.
- To provide visual perspective to MPD personnel to aid in managing public safety operations.
- To provide aerial, visual support – including images – of public safety operations as requested.
- To provide aerial images in areas considered hazardous for human life (e.g. Hazmat incidents).
- To assist Special Events Team or other MPD personnel with aerial assessments of crowd situations (to aid in identifying safety issues).
- To provide support for tactical operations.
- For training, testing, evaluation, demonstration or maintenance purposes.
- Other circumstances as approved by the Chief of Police or their designee.

Absent a valid search warrant, no UAS will be used to gather evidence or other information from or at a place where an individual has a reasonable expectation of privacy. This restriction does not apply to the following circumstances:

- UAS deployment in a public place;
- During an active search and rescue operation;
- To locate an escaped prisoner;
- To surveil a place or location for the purpose of executing an arrest warrant;
- If reasonable suspicion exists that UAS use is necessary to prevent imminent danger to an individual or to prevent the imminent destruction of evidence.

MPD UAS systems shall not be used:

- To conduct random surveillance activities.
- To target any person based solely on individual characteristics, such as, but not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, gender, or sexual orientation.
- To harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.
- Over any correctional institution.

- With any type of weapon attached or affixed.

The UAS will be operated within the current guidelines of the FAA, MPD, City of Madison APM and any existing Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) conditions. Only authorized operators who have been designated by the UAS Program Coordinator shall be permitted to operate the UAS, and only under the direct supervision of a remote pilot-in-command (PIC), if they are not certified. A police report will be completed any time a UAS is deployed for an operation (excluding training, maintenance, etc.).

The Chief will designate a UAS Program Coordinator who will be responsible for UAS operations. The program coordinator will ensure policies and procedures conform to current laws, regulations and best practices, and will have the following additional responsibilities:

- Coordinating the applications for Remote Pilot Airman Certificates and ensuring that rating is current prior to allowing the certificate holder to act as remote pilot-in-command (PIC) of the UAS.
- Coordinating any additional applications for Certificate of Authorization or Waiver (COA), and ensuring those COAs are current.
- Ensuring that all crew members (PIC, Visual Observer, Safety Officers, and Communications Officers) have completed any required training relevant to their position.
- Developing and maintaining operation protocols governing the deployment and operation of the UAS, including, but not limited to, use of visual observers, establishment of lost link procedures, and documenting all missions.
- Developing UAS maintenance, inspection, and record keeping protocol to ensure continued airworthiness of a UAS up to and including its overhaul or life limits.
- Recommending program enhancement, particularly regarding safety and information security.
- Maintaining a log of all UAS deployments and completing an annual report summarizing UAS use.
- Ensuring established protocols are followed by monitoring and providing periodic reports on the program to the Chief or their designee.
- Developing minimum training and evaluation requirements for crew members for the purpose of maintaining skills and proficiency in operation, and maintain records of that training.

A UAS may be deployed pursuant to a mutual-aid request with the approval of the Chief, program coordinator or designee. UAS deployment for mutual-aid requests will be in accordance with department training and this SOP.

## Retention of Data

Data collected through UAS deployment, including still and motion images, shall be stored and retained in accordance with MPD records retention schedules. Copies of files may also be saved for training purposes.

## Training

All personnel authorized to act as a UAS crew member shall receive appropriate training as directed by the Program Coordinator. That training shall, at a minimum, meet the requirements set forth by the FAA, and may be periodically adjusted to reflect operational needs and the latest safety information.

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