

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

June 24, 2025
1.14

TO: The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: SMALL UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM PROGRAM DEPLOYMENT
GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES – RENAMED AND REVISED; AND,
SMALL UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT LOG,
FORM 15.53.01 – RENAMED AND REVISED

RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is recommended that the Board of Police Commissioners REVIEW and APPROVE the revised policy regarding Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) use, as well as the associated form.

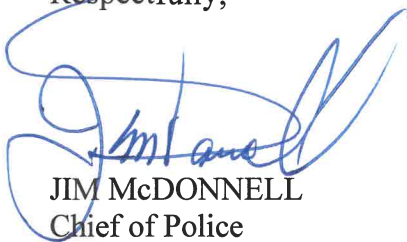
DISCUSSION

Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems represent a modern tool in law enforcement, increasingly used as a first response resource to calls for service and critical incidents. To keep pace with evolving technology, the Los Angeles Police Department (Department) has updated its sUAS policy to enhance the effectiveness and safety of sUAS deployment.

The revised policy allows for improving rapid response, increasing situational awareness, and ensuring sUAS are used responsibly during high-risk events. Emphasizing operational efficiency and safety, the policy supports swift deployment while maintaining clear protocols and public accountability. The attached Special Order revises the Department's sUAS policy and associated form in order to strengthen our ability to use sUAS technology strategically and effectively, while reinforcing trust with the community.

Should you have questions regarding this matter, please contact Commander Steven Ramos, Office of Constitutional Policing and Policy, at (213) 486-8730.

Respectfully,



JIM McDONNELL
Chief of Police

Attachment

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

SPECIAL ORDER NO.

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS ON

SUBJECT: SMALL UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM PROGRAM DEPLOYMENT GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES – RENAMED AND REVISED; AND, SMALL UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT LOG, FORM 15.53.01 – RENAMED AND REVISED

PURPOSE: As part of the Department's Strategic Plan, our goal is to expand new technologies to improve efficiencies. Law enforcement agencies across the nation have begun to use Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) to improve efficiencies by reducing response times to calls for service, documenting incidents for criminal prosecution, enhancing public and officer safety, and aiding personnel in assessing situations more effectively. This policy change is aimed at bringing the Department in line with our peer agencies across the nation and use sUAS technology to better serve the community.

PROCEDURE:

I. SMALL UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM PROGRAM DEPLOYMENT GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES – RENAMED AND REVISED. Department Manual Section 1/420.56, *Small Unmanned Aerial System Program Deployment Guidelines and Procedures*, has been renamed to, *Small Unmanned Aircraft System Deployment Guidelines and Procedures*. The manual section is attached with the revisions in italics.

II. SMALL UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT LOG, FORM 15.53.01 – RENAMED AND REVISED. The *Small Unmanned Aerial System Deployment Log*, Form 15.53.01, has been renamed and revised to, *Small Unmanned Aircraft System Deployment Log*.

A. Use of Form. This form is used to document the specific information pertaining to the deployment of an sUAS.

B. Completion. This form, or the information captured by it, is to be completed by the sUAS Operator after the deployment of an sUAS.

C. Distribution.

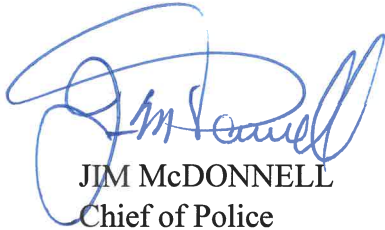
- 1 – Original, sUAS Coordinator
- 1 – Copy, Commanding Officer, sUAS Cadre operating the sUAS
- 1 – Copy, sUAS Program Manager, Office of Special Operation

3 – TOTAL

FORM AVAILABILITY: The renamed and revised *Small Unmanned Aircraft System Deployment Log*, Form 15.53.01, is available in E-Forms on the Department's LAN and is attached for immediate use and duplication. All other versions of the form shall be marked "obsolete" and placed into the Area divisional recycling bin.

AMENDMENT: This Order amends Section 1/420.56 of the Department Manual.

AUDIT RESPONSIBILITY: The Commanding Officer, Audit Division, shall review this directive and determine whether an audit or inspection shall be conducted in accordance with Department Manual Section 0/080.30.



JIM McDONNELL
Chief of Police

Attachments

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420.56 SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES.

Public safety agencies across the United States have increasingly utilized Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) to enhance operational capabilities by providing critical real-time information and improved situational awareness. Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems allow public safety agencies to assess potentially dangerous situations from a safe vantage point and can be used to direct police resources on the ground and mitigate the risk of harm to officers and the public.

The deployment of sUAS by the Department is intended to support its mission to protect and serve the public more effectively and safely. Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems can serve as a valuable de-escalation tool, particularly in preservation-of-life incidents, by allowing officers to assess evolving situations without the immediate need to place personnel in harm's way. They also contribute to the accurate reconstruction of complex incident scenes, including traffic crashes and crime scenes, by capturing aerial imagery and video that can assist with investigations and documentation. In addition, sUAS can assist with identifying a suspect's location that otherwise would be inaccessible without the introduction of an armed officer or K-9, thereby potentially reducing the risk of injury to officers, suspects, and members of the public.

To balance the public safety benefits of this technology with individual privacy, the Department must use sUAS in a manner that is consistent with the requirements and protections of the Constitution of the United States, the California State Constitution, and all applicable laws. The use of sUAS by the Department will be properly documented and monitored with appropriate oversight by the Board of Police Commissioners and its Office of the Inspector General.

Small Unmanned Aircraft System Program Manager Responsibilities. *The Director, Office of Special Operations, or designee, is the sUAS Program Manager. They are responsible for:*

- *Overseeing the Department's sUAS Program;*
- *Ensuring compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, including acquiring and maintaining FAA waivers, and Certificates of Authorization;*
- *Ensuring compliance with Department policies, FAA regulations, and applicable laws from sUAS Coordinators and their respective sUAS Cadres;*
- *Ensuring all the training and certifications are current and maintained by the Department;*
- *Providing and submitting the appropriate reports concerning sUAS operations directly to the Chief of Police or as requested by the Board of Police Commissioners; and,*
- *Annual reporting to Audit Division, per Government Code Section 7070 et. seq., (California Assembly Bill 481).*

Small Unmanned Aircraft System Coordinator Responsibilities. *A sUAS Coordinator is a supervisor assigned by the commanding officer of a division, Group, Bureau, or Office director to an sUAS Cadre. An sUAS Coordinator shall possess a Remote Pilot Certificate (Part 107). They are responsible for:*

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- *Overseeing and ensuring compliance with Department policy, FAA regulations, federal regulations, applicable laws, notifications, training, mandated tracking of sUAS activity, and remaining apprised of changes in sUAS industry best practices from their respective sUAS Cadre;*
- *Verifying all sUAS Operator's training and Remote Pilot Certificates (Part 107) are captured and retained by the Department;*
- *Retaining all sUAS Deployment documentation and providing reports, as requested on sUAS Deployments; and,*
- *Providing the sUAS Program Manager with the information and documentation for annual reporting to Audit Division, per Government Code Section 7070 et. seq.*

***Note:** Further restrictions may be placed on an sUAS Cadre as appropriate for their mission by the sUAS Coordinator. The sUAS Program Manager may also place further restrictions on an sUAS Cadre as a result of a safety or risk management concern.*

Small Unmanned Aircraft System Cadre Responsibilities. *An sUAS Cadre consists of personnel assigned to sUAS operations. They are supervised by an sUAS Coordinator. Small Unmanned Aircraft System Cadre members include sUAS Operators, also known as Remote Pilots in Command, and Visual Observers. They are responsible for the safe operation of the sUAS as used for one of the permissible uses.*

***Note:** Small Unmanned Aircraft System Cadre members shall not operate personal sUAS while on duty.*

Certification and Training. *Eligibility to the Department's sUAS Program requires the below training and certifications to ensure sUAS Operators can demonstrate their understanding of FAA regulations, operating requirements, and procedures for safely flying sUAS for the Department:*

- I. Possess a valid Remote Pilot Certificate (Part 107) from the FAA prior to attending any Department sUAS training; and,*
- II. Complete a Department-approved sUAS training and any subsequent required training updates.*

Permissible Uses. *Only authorized sUAS Operators who have completed the required training shall be permitted to operate sUAS. Only Department-owned and approved sUAS and equipment shall be used to conduct sUAS Deployments. An sUAS Operator may deploy an sUAS only for official Department purposes and in a manner that respects the reasonable expectation of privacy, pursuant to all applicable laws and regulations.*

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Prohibited Uses. *Department sUAS shall not:*

- *Be deployed or used in violation of the City of Los Angeles municipal laws, California State laws, the United States Constitution, any FAA regulations, or published flight restrictions (absent waiver);*
- *Be used to unlawfully harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group;*
- *Be used to target a person based solely on actual or perceived characteristics, such as, race, color, religion or creed, age, national origin, ethnicity, immigration status, gender (including gender identity or expression), sexual orientation, disability, or military status;*
- *Be used to record or photograph First Amendment assemblies for the purpose of identifying participants who are not engaged in unlawful conduct;*
- *Be equipped with any weapon system or facial recognition software;*
- *Be used as a weapon;*
- *Be deployed when weather conditions or other hazards prevent the safe operation of the aircraft or in a manner exceeding the manufacturer's recommendations;*
- *Be used for personal business of any kind; and,*
- *Be used in a manner that is contrary to any additional restrictions imposed by the sUAS Program Manager or an sUAS Coordinator.*

Protection of Privacy. The Department shall only collect, use, and disseminate information obtained from an sUAS for a permissible use. Operators must follow FAA altitude regulations and are prohibited from intentionally recording or transmitting images of any location from an elevation or proximity in which individuals would have a reasonable expectation of privacy (absent a warrant, exigent circumstances, or consent of the property owner). Operators shall take reasonable precautions to avoid inadvertently recording or transmitting images of areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Documentation and Inspection Procedures. All sUAS Deployments shall be documented in the proper format for the specific cadre using the sUAS. At a minimum, the documentation shall include the date, time, location, sUAS Operator's name and serial number, and purpose of sUAS Deployment. The sUAS Coordinator of the sUAS Cadre deploying an sUAS shall ensure the documentation of an sUAS Deployment and all flight data is provided to the sUAS Program Manager.

Recording of Incidents. Recording of each incident shall begin at or near the scene of the incident and continue until the sUAS either leaves the location or the investigative or enforcement activity involving a member of the public has ended.

Procedure for Reviewing sUAS Recordings in Categorical Use of Force Incidents. If an officer is involved in a Categorical Use of Force, such as an officer involved shooting, an officer shall not review the sUAS recording prior to being interviewed by Force Investigation Division.

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Data Retention. *Absent exigent or unexpected circumstances, such as a malfunction or technical issue, the sUAS Program Manager shall ensure all sUAS Deployments, and associated data are captured and retained in accordance with Department policy. All video shall be stored in Evidence.com.*

The sUAS Program Manager shall conduct periodic internal inspections of deployments to ensure the appropriate data and mandated information are collected as required.

Personnel Complaints. *Conduct of Department personnel observed during the review of an sUAS recording in connection with an administrative investigation should focus on the object of the review. If minor misconduct is discovered during an investigation, the progressive discipline model shall be followed prior to framing an allegation for the minor misconduct discovered during the review. The supervisor discovering the minor misconduct is responsible for notifying the employee's commanding officer of the minor misconduct, who should evaluate the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident. The employee's commanding officer must use sound judgment to determine the appropriate course of action while following the progressive discipline model.*

All complaints and concerns will be documented and responded to in a timely manner, in compliance with Department policy and Government Code Section 7070 et. seq.

Collision Procedures. *If an sUAS collision occurs during the operation of an sUAS, the sUAS Operator shall notify their sUAS Coordinator. If their sUAS Coordinator is not immediately available to respond, then a supervisor within their command shall also be notified and respond. The sUAS Coordinator shall make notifications to their Commanding Officer, FAA, and National Transportation Safety Board as applicable.*

Government Code Section 7070 et. seq. Requirements. *Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems are considered military equipment by the State of California and require annual reporting on their use and involved costs. The sUAS Program Manager is responsible for collecting all Inventory, Procurement, and Use of Military Equipment, Form 15.62.00, submissions completed by sUAS Coordinators. To implement consistency in reporting across all sUAS Cadres, the sUAS Program Manager shall submit the final forms to Audit Division. Further requirements are delineated in Department Manual Section 1/140.25.*

Annual Report to the Board of Police Commissioners. *The Department will provide an annual report to the Board of Police Commissioners on the use and deployment of an sUAS. The report shall include:*

- *An analysis of the Department's use of sUAS, including the adherence of sUAS Deployments to this policy;*
- *The number of sUAS Deployments;*
- *The types of situations in which an sUAS was deployed;*

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- The overall results and effectiveness of *the use of sUAS to resolve incidents, including whether the sUAS mitigated the risk of harm to officers, suspects, or the public, or whether the sUAS reduced costs associated with responding to similar incidents;*
- *The nature of complaints and concerns received about sUAS Deployments;*
- *The number of sUAS collisions and whether any collisions resulted in harm to any person or property; and,*
- *Recommendations on whether any modifications to these guidelines or other policies and procedures should be considered.*

DEFINITIONS.

Small Unmanned Aircraft System: *A remotely-operated small unmanned aircraft system without any human pilot, crew, or passengers on board.*

Small Unmanned Aircraft System Deployment: *Any sUAS flight operation performed for an official Department purpose that is within the scope of permissible uses.*

Small Unmanned Aircraft System Operator/Remote Pilot in Command: *A specially trained Department employee assigned to a cadre shall possess a valid Remote Pilot Certificate (Part 107) obtained from the FAA. They are responsible for the safe operation of an sUAS.*

Small Unmanned Aircraft System Training Flight: *Any sUAS flight operation performed exclusively for the purpose of training, testing or proficiency checks.*

Official Department Purposes: *Official Department purposes includes any law enforcement purpose (except those identified as prohibited uses above), training, participation in ceremonial and community events, and development of educational and promotional videos.*

Visual Observer (VO): *A Visual Observer is a person who maintains visual contact with the sUAS during flight, scanning airspace around it to identify potential obstacles or hazards and communicates that information to the sUAS Operator.*

Los Angeles Police Department
Small Unmanned Aircraft System Deployment Log

Deployment Number: <small>(Cadre / Year / Number) E.g., SWAT 2025-01</small>	Incident Number:	Time:	Complete Address: <small>(To include city)</small>	Area & RD of Occurrence
sUAS Operator(s) (Name, Serial No. & Division):				
Type of Incident: <small>(Check appropriate box)</small> <div style="margin-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Call for service <input type="checkbox"/> High-risk incident <input type="checkbox"/> Investigative purpose <input type="checkbox"/> Large-scale event <input type="checkbox"/> Natural disaster <input type="checkbox"/> Production of Department advertisement or training video <input type="checkbox"/> Scene reconstruction <input type="checkbox"/> Search and rescue operation <input type="checkbox"/> Training <input type="checkbox"/> Warrant Service</div>				
Results of Deployment				
sUAS Operator Review <small>(Signature & Serial No.)</small> <div style="text-align: right;">Date:</div>			sUAS Coordinator Review <small>(Signature & Serial No.)</small> <div style="text-align: right;">Date:</div>	
sUAS Cadre C/O (All Non-DFR Deployments) <small>(Signature & Serial No.)</small> <div style="text-align: right;">Date:</div>			sUAS Program Manager Review <small>(Signature & Serial No.)</small> <div style="text-align: right;">Date:</div>	

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15.53.01 SMALL UNMANNED *AIRCRAFT* SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT LOG, FORM 15.53.01.

15.53.01-01 Use of Form. This form is used to document the specific information pertaining to the deployment of a Small Unmanned *Aircraft* System (sUAS).

15.53.01-10 Completion. This form, *or the information captured by it* is to be *completed* by the sUAS *Operator after the deployment of a sUAS.*

15.53.01-80 Distribution.

- 1 – Original, *sUAS Coordinator*
- 1 – Copy, *Commanding Officer, sUAS Cadre operating the sUAS*
- 1 – Copy, *sUAS Program Manager, Office of Special Operations*

3 – TOTAL