

Ridgefield Police Department sUAS Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Policy 09.13

(Commonly referred to as Drones)



Drones, Why Now?

The emerging technology of drones enables police departments to de-escalate situations and utilize time, distance and shielding to reduce Use of Force encounters and optimize community and officer safety.

On June 8th, 2023, council approved the budget amendment including the drone funding, by Ordinance No. 1402.



Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to provide safe, efficient, and lawful use of the sUAS including privacy protections, operational duties, guidelines and the use and dissemination of images and data capture by the sUAS.



Purpose:

The small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) program is designed to provide aerial observations during law enforcements incident involving the Ridgefield Police Department in circumstances that would save life and property, as well as other operational needs such as:

- Search and rescue involving missing or endangered persons
- Collision Investigations
- Major crime investigations
- High risk incidents / calls
- Over-watch for high-risk traffic stops / warrant service
- Community demonstrations
- Natural Disasters



Compliance:

- The sUAS will be used in a constitutionally and legally sound manner by trained and certified personnel, to conduct operations and investigations.
- The use of the sUAS will be in accordance with City, State and Federal Law, to include constitutional privacy rights, search and seizure regulations and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations.
 - Ridgefield Police Department Policy 03.23.010 Search and Seizure
 - Public Records Policy 01.12.010 Records Retention and Dissemination
- The Ridgefield Police Department shall be mindful of the individual privacy rights and absent a warrant or exigent circumstances shall not intentionally record or transmit images in any location where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy.



sUAS Platforms:

The Ridgefield Police Department currently utilizes two sUAS platforms:

1. DJI M30T – For Outdoor Use (Law Enforcement / Government Use only)
 - Can be flown day or night through wind and rain
 - Powerful zoom camera
 - Thermal camera able to provide high quality views at night and detect heat signatures
 - Equipped with microphone / spotlight for commands and illumination
 - Ability to take high quality pictures and videos



sUAS Platforms:

The 2nd sUAS platform the department utilizes is:

2. (2) DJI Avata – For Indoor Use (Law Enforcement and Government only).

- Highly maneuverable
- Fit into tight spaces
- Equipped with camera
- Has ability to take high quality pictures and video



Training:

Two RPD officers and one sergeant have obtained their FAA Part 107 airmen's certificate to operate the drones. Their initial training consisted of:

- 2-day licensing course to obtain their FAA Part 107 license
 - 3-day practical application
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- Officers trained to operate the drones are required to have a minimum of 8 hours of flight training with a current sUAS Instructor.
 - Operators will document a minimum of 8 hours of flight time per year.
 - License re-certification every 2 years.



Recommended Action or Motion:

If the council chooses to adopt the Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) Policy, a motion would be:

“I move to adopt Resolution no. 646 – Ridgefield Police Department Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Policy 09.13, as presented.”

