

# Small Unmanned Aerial System (sUAS) Operations

<b>Effective Date:</b>	01/29/2026
<b>Revised Date:</b>	
<b>Issuing Authority:</b>	

## 712.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear, legally compliant guidelines for the deployment, operation, data management, and oversight of small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) in support of law enforcement, emergency response, and public safety missions. This policy ensures compliance with the Fourth Amendment, Article I Section 6 of the Illinois Constitution, FAA regulations including 14 CFR Part 107, Part 91, and 725 ILCS 167.

## 712.2 POLICY

The Alsip Police Department shall operate sUAS in strict compliance with constitutional protections, privacy rights, FAA Part 107 regulations, FAA Part 91 public aircraft operations requirements, and the Illinois Drones as First Responders Act (725 ILCS 167). The sUAS shall be used only for authorized law enforcement or public safety purposes and shall not be used for generalized surveillance, intelligence gathering, or any purpose prohibited by law.

## 712.3 DEFINITIONS

**COA:** Certificate of Authorization, issued by the Air Traffic Organization to a public operator for a specific unmanned aircraft activity.

**Drone:** A common term for sUAs.

**Exigent Circumstances:** A situation requiring immediate action to prevent imminent harm to life, the imminent escape of a suspect, or the imminent destruction of evidence.

**Drone As First Responder (DFR):** A Drone as First Responder (DFR) system includes prepositioned drones at launch stations, enabling rapid, remote sUAS deployment to an incident. Launch stations are spaced strategically so drones can arrive on the scene in minutes, often before emergency response personnel. The drones transmit critical information back to emergency teams in real time, allowing for faster and better-informed decision-making.

**Disaster:** As defined in 20 ILCS 3305, the Illinois Emergency Act, means an occurrence of threat of widespread or severe damage, injury or loss of life or property resulting from any natural, technological, or human cause, including but not limited to fire, flood, earthquake, wind, storm, hazardous materials spill or other water contamination requiring emergency action to avert danger or damage, epidemic, air contamination, drought, infestation, critical shortages of essential fuels

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and energy, explosion, riot, hostile military or paramilitary action, public health emergencies, cyber incidents, or acts of domestic terrorism.

**Drone Team Leader:** Sworn supervisor responsible for the day-to-day management and usage of the small, unmanned aircraft.

**Federal Aviation Administration (FAA):** A national authority with powers to regulate all aspects of civil aviation. These include the construction and operation of airports, the management of air traffic, the certification of personnel and aircraft, and the protection of US assets during the launch or re-entry of commercial space vehicles.

**Information:** As defined in 725 ILCS 167, any evidence, images, sounds, data, or other information gathered by the unmanned aircraft.

**Parade:** As defined in 725 ILCS 167/5, the Drones as First Responders Act, means a march, procession, or other similar activity consisting of persons, animals, vehicles, or things, or any combination thereof, upon a public street, sidewalk, alley, or other public place, which requires a street closing or otherwise requires stopping or rerouting vehicular traffic because the parade will not or cannot comply with normal and usual traffic regulations or controls. "Parade" does not include a political protest, march, demonstration, or other assembly protected by the First Amendment.

**Public Health Emergency:** As defined in 20 ILCS 3305/1, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act, means an occurrence or imminent threat of an illness or health condition that:

(a) is believed to be caused by any of the following: bioterrorism, the appearance of a novel or previously controlled or eradicated infectious agent or biological toxin, a natural disaster, a chemical attack or accidental release or a nuclear attack or accident and

(b) poses a high probability of any of the following harms: a large number of deaths in the affected population, a large number of serious or long-term disabilities in the affected population or widespread exposure to an infectious or toxic agent that poses a significant risk of substantial future harm to a large number of people in the affected population.

**Public Aircraft Operation (PAO):** A governmental function conducted under 49 U.S.C. § 40102(a)(41) and operated in accordance with 14 CFR Part 91 and an FAA-issued Certificate of Authorization (COA).

**Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP):** As defined in 50 ILCS 750, the Emergency Telephone System Act, means the primary answering location of an emergency call that meets the appropriate standards of service and is responsible for receiving and processing those calls and events according to a specified operational policy.

**Remote Pilot in Command:** Person directly responsible for and is the final authority as to the operation of the small, unmanned aircraft.

**Routed Event:** Means a parade, walk, or race that (1) is hosted by the State of Illinois or a country, municipality, township, or park district; (2) is outdoors and open to the public; and (3) has

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an estimated attendance of more than 50 people. "Routed Event" does not include any political protest, march, demonstration, or other assembly protected by the First Amendment.

**Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS):** A small, unmanned aircraft that does not carry a human operator, weighing less than 55 pounds on takeoff, and its associated elements, including communication links and the components that control the aircraft that are required for the safe and efficient operation of the aircraft.

**Special Event:** For the purpose of sUAS usage and 72S ILCS 167, means a concert or food festival hosted by the State or a county/municipality/township/park district. A special event does not include any political protest, march, demonstration, or other assembly protected by the First Amendment.

1. Is hosted by the State of Illinois or a county, municipality, township, or par district.
2. Is outdoors and open to the public.
3. Has an estimated attendance of:
  - a. 150 or more people in a unit of local government with a population that is less than 50,000.
  - b. 250 or more people in a unit of local government with a population that is greater than or equal to 50,000 but less than 100,000.
  - c. 350 or more people in a unit of local government with a population that is greater than or equal to 100,000 but less than 500,000.
  - d. 500 or more people in a unit of local government with a population that is 500,000 or more.

**Telemetry Data:** Automated flight logs, GPS data, battery information, and system diagnostics generated by the aircraft or controller.

**Visual Observer:** The person designated by the Remote Pilot in Command to assist the Remote Pilot in Command and the person manipulating the flight controls of the aircraft to see and avoid other air traffic or objects aloft or on the ground.

### **712.4 PROGRAM COORINDATOR**

The Chief of Police will appoint a program coordinator who will be responsible for the overall management of the sUAS program. The program coordinator will ensure that policies and procedures conform to current laws, regulations, and current practices. Additional responsibilities will include:

1. Ensure that required Part 107 certificates, Part 91 COA certificates and drone insurance policies are kept current.

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2. Ensure that all authorized operators have completed current department-approved training in sUAS operation including Part 107 remote pilot certification, and applicable laws and policies.
3. Maintain FAA remote pilot certificates and training records.
3. Ensure protocol for submission and evaluation for requests to deploy the sUAS, including urgent requests made during on-going or emerging incidents.
4. Maintain operation protocol governing the safe deployment and operation of sUAS, along with documenting all missions.
5. Ensure compliance with the NTSB Part 830 accident-reporting requirements.
6. Maintain inspection and maintenance logs to ensure continuing airworthiness of a sUAS, up to and including its overall life limits.
7. Ensure 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.
8. Ensure retention and purge periods are maintained in accordance with established records retention schedules.
9. Recommend program enhancements, especially regarding safety and information security.
10. Conduct a documented annual year-end review of the program to determine the overall success of the program and to provide recommendations for improvements, if any. The report shall be forwarded to the Lieutentat of Services.
11. Report annually, by April 1, to the Illinois Criminal Justice Authority pursuant to 725 ILCS 167/35:
  - a. the number of drones owned by the Alsip Police Department
  - b. the number of times a drone was used pursuant to each paragraph of Section 15 of 725 ILCS 167
    - i. including the date of each use, time of each use, reason for each use, location, whether video was recorded, and whether the video is designated for retention for training purposes.
  - c. The report shall contain a copy of the agency's latest policy concerning drones as of the most recent April 1 of that year.
  - d. Complete the report here:

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12. Ensure that an updated copy of the Alsip Police Department's Policy on drones is available on the Alsip Police Department's website.
13. Ensure that notification is made to the Cook County State's Attorney if the deployment requires notification under 725 ILCS 167/15.
14. Maintaining a Flight Termination Authority protocol ensuring the RPIC may terminate any flight for safety or legal reasons.

#### **712.5 TRAINING PRIOR TO USE OF THE SUAS**

- A. Prior to authorization to operate a sUAS, assigned personnel must complete mandatory training provided by the department to obtain an understanding on how to use the sUAS and the procedures outlined in this policy.
- B. Assigned officers will undergo training on the equipment to ensure continued effective use, operation of the equipment and to incorporate changes, updates, or other revisions to the FAA and/or Part 91.113 requirements, statutes, or department policy.
- C. Additional training may be provided at periodic intervals for personnel displaying a substandard performance in the use of sUAS equipment.
- D. Annual recurrent training shall include Part 91 updates, COA changes, and scenario-based emergency response.
- E. Sworn personnel will undergo training to understand the deployment of the sUAS and its equipment.

#### **712.6 USE OF THE SUAS**

- A. The police department must obtain applicable authorizations, permits, or certificates as required by FAA prior to deploying or operating the sUAS, and ensure these documents are current.
- B. Pursuant to the Drone as First Responder Act, 725 ILCS 167/15, the sUAS may be used to gather information during the following situations:
  1. To counter a high risk of a terrorist attack by a specific individual organization if the United States Secretary of Homeland Security determines that credible intelligence indicates there is a risk.
  2. If the Alsip Police Department first obtains a search warrant based on probable cause issued under Section 108-3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1963, 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.
  3. If the Alsip Police Department 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 sUAS under this

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paragraph is limited to a period of 48 hours. Within 24 hours of sUAS initiation under this paragraph, the Chief of Police must report its use, in writing, to the State's Attorney.

- a. The remote pilot in command is responsible for submitting the form to the Program Coordinator.
  - b. The Program Coordinator will submit the form to the State's Attorney's Office once review has been made by the Chief. A copy of the form will be provided to the Records Division for filing with the incident report.
4. To obtain crime scene and traffic crash scene photography in a geographically confined and time-limited manner. The use of a sUAS under this paragraph on private property requires either a search warrant or lawful consent to search.
  5. If a law enforcement agency is using a sUAS during a disaster or public health emergency, as defined by 20 ILCS 3305/1, the use of a sUAS does not require an official declaration of a disaster or public health emergency prior to use. A law enforcement agency may use a sUAS under this paragraph to obtain information necessary for the determination of whether or not a disaster or public health emergency should be declared, to monitor weather or emergency conditions, to survey damage, or to otherwise coordinate response and recovery efforts. The use of a sUAS under this paragraph is permissible during the disaster or public health emergency and during subsequent response and recovery efforts.
  6. To conduct an infrastructure inspection of a designated building or structure at the express request of a local government agency. Any law enforcement agency operating a sUAS under this paragraph shall make every reasonable attempt to photograph only the building or structure and avoid other areas.
  7. To demonstrate the capabilities and functionality of a police sUAS for public relations purposes, provided that no information is collected or recorded by the drone during such demonstration.
  8. In response to Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) dispatched call for service, when the sole purpose for using a sUAS is for one or more first responders to local victims, to assist with immediate victim health or safety needs, or to coordinate the response of emergency vehicles and personnel to an emergency. As used in this paragraph, "Public Safety Answering Point" and "PSAP" have the meaning given to those terms in Section 2 of the Emergency Telephone System Act. Refer to the definitions section of this policy for more information.
  9. The Sergeant in charge of the event shall consult with the Drone Program Coordinator to determine if a sUAS should be utilized during a special event, parade, or routed event to prepare for or observe crowd size, density, and movement, assess public safety staffing, or oversee the general safety of the participants.

- a. If a law enforcement agency is using a sUAS at a routed event or special event, the use of a sUAS under this paragraph requires that:

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1. A notice is posted at the event location for at least 24 hours before the event and clearly communicates that a sUAS may be used at the upcoming event for the purpose of real-time monitoring of participant safety. The Sergeant in charge of the event is responsible for ensuring the posting of signs.

2. A notice is posted, if practical, at major entry points to the event and clearly communicate to the participants that a drone may be used for the purpose of real-time monitoring of participant safety.

3. The sUAS is flown in accordance with FAA safety regulations. Under this paragraph, a law enforcement agency may use the drone:

i. In advance of an event, before event participants have begun to assemble, for the sole purpose of creating maps and determining appropriate access routes, staging areas, and traffic routes, provided that no personal identifying information is recorded and provided further that no recorded information is used in any criminal prosecution.

ii. To evaluate crowd size and density.

iii. To identify activity that could present a public safety issue for the crowd, including crowd movement.

iv. To assist in the response of public safety personnel to a real-time public safety incident at the event.

v. To assess the traffic and pedestrian flow around the event in real-time.

C. Requests to deploy the sUAS flight shall be made to the Program Coordinator or the on duty Supervisor. All sUAS operations may be conducted under FAA Part 91 when action as a Public Aircraft Operator (PAO) and only when authorized by a valid FAA Certificate of Authorization (COA).

D. Whenever possible, if the sUAS will be flying within close proximity to a hospital or fire station heliport, which could create a hazardous situation for a manned aircraft, notification shall be made to the respective hospital's or fire department's security office.

E. At the conclusion of each deployment, any recordings or images shall be securely downloaded and proper evidence procedures shall be followed.

F. All uses of the sUAS will be documented electronically and maintained by the Program Coordinator.

1. Information shall include:

a. the reason for the flight

b. date

c. time

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- d. location
- e. outcome of the deployment
- f. whether a flight was conducted under Part 107 or Part 91 and shall record the applicable COA number.

### **712.7 PRE-FLIGHT INSPECTION REPORTING**

A. Upon determining that an incident qualifies for use of a drone, the remote pilot in command will contact the on-duty supervisor to deploy the drone.

B. Prior to deployment, the remote pilot in command will conduct a preflight inspection of the drone.

1. Complete the sUAS Flight Report, and inspect the sUAS and related equipment to verify proper functioning and ensure batteries are fully charged in accordance to the manufacturer's recommendations.
2. Inspect the body of the sUAS, the charging and camera cables to look for signs of visible damage.
3. Ensure the propeller blades are in flight worthy condition.

### **712.8 INSPECTION AND CARE**

A. The sUAS and related equipment shall be maintained in the state of operational readiness. Assigned pilots shall use reasonable care to ensure the proper functioning of the sUAS equipment.

1. Malfunctions shall be brought to the attention of the Program Coordinator and assigned pilots as soon as possible. Extra caution must be taken to ensure the equipment is not stored in extreme temperatures.

B. Bi-weekly inspections of all drones will be conducted by the Program Coordinator.

### **712.9 POST FLIGHT REPORTING**

A. Upon completion of the deployment of the drone the remote pilot in command will complete all necessary paperwork.

1. All drone deployments will be documented. Information shall include the reason for the flight; the date, time, and location; the supervisor who approved of the deployment and the assigned operators; and a summary of the activities covered, actions taken, and outcome of the deployment.

B. The Program Coordinator will be responsible for destroying any necessary drone files per 725 ILCS 167/35. See Section 712.13 RETENTION AND DISCLOSURE OF DRONE INFORMATION.

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C. If the information obtained from the drone will be maintained as evidence, the remote pilot in command will securely download the recordings into the recording software and add the appropriate category to them.

#### **712.10 SECURITY OF RECORDINGS**

A. Personnel should be aware that recordings may contain sensitive information and are responsible for ensuring compliance to this Order. A breach in security, careless handling of the recordings, and/or intentional release of recordings to non-authorized individuals may jeopardize relationships with citizens, subject victims to an invasion of privacy, and jeopardize prosecutions.

B. All recordings are considered investigative property of the Alsip Police Department. The utmost care and caution shall be taken to ensure the recordings are not mishandled or misused.

C. Employees shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute in any manner recordings without authorization under existing law, this order, or the Lieutenant of Services.

D. Any violations related to unauthorized edits, alterations, and dissemination of this data shall be cause for disciplinary action.

#### **712.11 ASSISTING OTHER AGENCIES**

A. The sUAS equipment shall not be loaned to other agencies.

B. Requests by other agencies for sUAS assistance require that a Department assigned operator respond with the equipment and operate it.

C. All assists shall be documented in an Incident Report and a copy provided to the Team Supervisor. Assists to other agencies shall also require the completion of the sUAS Flight Report, the sUAS Flight Log, and the Notification of Drone Deployment form, if applicable.

#### **712.12 ACCIDENT REPORTING**

A. The FAA requires notification of certain sUAS accidents. Pursuant to 14 CFR 1 Drone Operation & Certification Regulations, within 10 days after the accident, the Remote Pilot in Command must report accidents to the FAA and the National Traffic Safety Board (NTSB) in the following situations:

1. Serious injury to any person or loss of consciousness.
2. Damage to any property, other than the sUAS, unless one of the following conditions is satisfied:
  - a. the cost of repair including materials and labor does not exceed \$500.00, or
  - b. the fair market value of the property does not exceed \$500.00 in the event of a total loss.

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B. The Remote Pilot in Command is required to initiate a police report for any accident involving the sUAS. The police report shall include the following information:

1. Name and contact information for operators and witnesses.
2. Type of operation.
3. Type of device and registration number/certificate.
4. Event location and incident details.
5. Evidence collection such as photos, video, and device confiscation, if necessary.

C. When the accident meets the criteria listed under Section A, the Remote Pilot in Command shall provide notification to the FAA by using the FAA's DroneZone Portal.

#### **712.13 RESTRICTIONS**

A. The sUAS will not be used to:

1. Conduct random surveillance activities or requests for information.
2. Target a person based solely on individual characteristics such as, but not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, gender, or sexual orientation.
3. Harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.
4. Conduct personal business of any type.
5. Gather information during a political protest, march, demonstration or other assembly protected by the First Amendment.
6. Operate facial recognition software. A law enforcement agency operating a sUAS under the Drones as First Responders Act is prohibited from using, during a flight, an onboard facial recognition software that works in conjunction with the sUAS. A law enforcement agency operating a sUAS under the Drones as First Responders Act is prohibited from using any information gathered by a sUAS with any facial recognition software unless either:
  - a. The law enforcement agency is using a sUAS to counter a high risk of a terrorist attack by a specific individual or organization and the United States Secretary of Homeland Security has determined that credible intelligence indicates there is such a risk.
  - b. The law enforcement agency possesses reasonable suspicion that, under particular circumstances, swift action is needed to prevent imminent harm to life or to forestall the imminent escape of a suspect or the destruction of evidence.
  - c. Transport weapons. A law enforcement agency operating a sUAS under the Drones as First Responders Act is prohibited from equipping or using a sUAS on any firearm, weaponized laser, kinetic impact projectile, chemical agent or irritant, or any other lethal or non-lethal weapon.

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d. Any situation outside what is specified in USE OF sUAS under Section 712.6.

B. sUAS deployments by the Alsip Police Department must also adhere to the operating guidelines established by the FAA. These rules are outlined below, but are not limited to:

1. Conduct a pre-flight check to ensure the sUAS is in safe operation.
2. Keep the sUAS in visual line of sight.
3. Fly at or below 400 feet above ground level or structure.
4. Fly at or below 100 mph.
5. Yield right of way to manned aircraft.
6. Must not fly from a moving vehicle, except in rural areas.
7. During an emergency situation, deviations from policy is permitted.

C. The sUAS Program Coordinator shall request a certificate waiver from the FAA which authorizes deviation from specific regulations. The certificate waiver will be granted when the FAA determines that the sUAS operation can be safely conducted under the terms of the certificate waiver.

D. Personnel shall notify the Program Coordinator when he/she knows or has reason to know that he/she has a medical condition that would interfere with the safe operation of the sUAS.

#### **712.14 PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS**

A. Use of the sUAS potentially involves privacy considerations. Absent a warrant or exigent circumstances, operators and visual 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. Operators and visual observers shall take reasonable precautions to avoid inadvertently recording or transmitting images of areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

B. When there are specific and articulable grounds to believe that the sUAS will collect evidence of criminal wrongdoing and/or if the sUAS will be used in a manner that may intrude upon reasonable expectation of privacy, the department will obtain a search warrant prior to conducting the flight.

#### **712.15 RETENTION AND DISCLOSURE OF DRONE INFORMATION**

A. Destruction within 30 days:

1. Per 725 ILCS 167/20, information gathered by the drone shall be destroyed within 30 days for the following:
  - a. Terrorist attack
  - b. Search warrant

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- c. Prevention of imminent harm to life, forestall the imminent escape of a subject, or destruction of evidence
- d. Missing person investigations, search and rescue missions, or aiding a person who cannot otherwise be safely reached
- e. Crime scene and traffic crash scene photography
- f. Disaster or public health emergency
- g. Calls for service dispatched by a PSAP where the sole purpose is to locate victims, assist with victim health and safety needs, or to coordinate an emergency response
- h. 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.

### B. Destruction within 24 hours:

1. Information gathered at a routed event or special event.
2. All information gathered from a infrastructure inspection shall be turned over to the requesting local government agency as soon as practicable, and all gathered information shall be destroyed immediately after the information has been turned over.

C. Pursuant to 725 ILCS 167/25, the disclosure of information gathered by a drone is prohibited, except to another government agency where 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. The disclosure of information to another government agency must first be approved by a supervisor.

D. Information gathered may also be retained if the drone program coordinator, or other agency supervisor, deems that the information will be used exclusively for training purposes, provided that any such information shall not contain any personally identifiable information, or the information consists of only flight path data, metadata, or telemetry information of the drone.

E. Disclosure of records of drone usage is subject to the the Freedom of Information Act, including flight path data, metadata, or telemetry information of specific flights.

F. The Department may utilize information from private drones only for the purpose of undertaking the tasks outlined in this Section above.

1. The Department shall not disclose any information gathered by the private drone. However, a supervisor may disclose information 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.