

**Purpose**

This policy is intended to provide personnel who are assigned responsibilities associated with the deployment and use of small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) with instructions on when and how this technology and the information it provides may be used for law enforcement and public safety purposes in accordance with law.

**Policy**

It is the policy of the Cecil County Sheriff's Office that duly trained and authorized agency personnel may deploy sUAS when such use is appropriate in the performance of their official duties, and where deployment and use, and the collection and use of any audio/video recordings or other data originating from or generated by the sUAS, comport with the policy provisions provided herein and applicable law.

**Definitions:**

**Digital Multimedia Evidence (DME):** Digital recording of images, sounds, and associated data.

**Model Aircraft:** A remote controlled aircraft used by hobbyists that is built, produced, manufactured, and operated for the purposes of sport, recreation, and/or competition.

**Unmanned Aircraft (UA) or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV):** An aircraft that is intended to navigate in the air without an on-board pilot. Also alternatively called Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), or Drone.

**Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS):** A system that includes the necessary equipment, network, and personnel to control an unmanned aircraft.

**Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS):** UAS systems that utilize UAVs weighing less than 55 pounds and are consistent with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations governing model aircraft.

**UAS Flight Crewmember:** A pilot, visual observer, payload operator or other person assigned duties for a UAS for the purpose of flight or training exercise.

**Unmanned Aircraft Pilot:** A person exercising control over a UA/UAV/UAS during flight.

## Procedures

### A. Administration

1. All deployments of sUAS must be specifically authorized by Sheriff or his designee. The Sheriff's Office has adopted the use of sUAS to provide an aerial visual perspective in responding to emergency situations and exigent circumstances, and for the following objectives:
2. **Situational Awareness:** To assist decision makers (e.g., incident command staff; first responders; city, county, and state officials) in understanding the nature, scale, and scope of an incident—and for planning and coordinating an effective response.
3. **Search and Rescue:** To assist missing person investigations, AMBER Alerts, Silver Alerts, and other search and rescue missions.
4. **Tactical Deployment:** To support the tactical deployment of officers and equipment in emergency situations (e.g., incidents involving hostages and barricades, support for large-scale tactical operations, and other temporary perimeter security situations).
5. **Visual Perspective:** To provide an aerial visual perspective to assist officers in providing direction for crowd control, traffic incident management, special circumstances, and temporary perimeter security.
6. **Scene Documentation:** To document a crime scene, accident scene, or other major incident scene (e.g., disaster management, incident response, large-scale forensic scene investigation).

### B. Procedures for sUAS Use

1. The Sheriff's Office shall obtain any applicable authorizations, permits, or certificates required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prior to deploying or operating the sUAS, and these authorizations, permits, and certificates shall be maintained and current.
2. The sUAS will be operated only by personnel (pilots and crew members) who have been trained and certified in the operation of the systems.
3. The sUAS-certified personnel shall inspect and test sUAS equipment prior to each deployment to verify the proper functioning of all equipment and the airworthiness of the device.

4. The sUAS equipment is the responsibility of individual personnel and will be used with reasonable care to ensure proper functioning. Equipment malfunctions shall be brought to the attention of the sUAS Training Coordinator as soon as possible so that an appropriate repair can be made or a replacement unit can be procured.
5. The sUAS equipment and all data, images, video, and metadata captured, recorded, or otherwise produced by the equipment is the sole property of the Sheriff's Office.
6. All flights will be documented as soon as practical utilizing the following CCSO Form(s) #: SO-010 UAV Flight Log, SO-015 UAV Field Packing and Pre-Deployment checklist, SO-016 UAV Pre-Flight Inspection Checklist, SO-050 UAV Approved Crew Members Flight Log, and if applicable SO-022 UAV Permission Form. All information will be logged electronically by the sUAS Training Coordinator as soon as possible. In addition, each deployment of the sUAS shall include information regarding the reason for the flight; the time, date, and location of the flight; the name of the supervisor approving the deployment and the staff assigned; and a summary of the activities covered, actions taken, and outcomes from the deployment.
7. With the exception of a training flight, all operational flights will be documented on an agency incident report. This report will be completed as soon as practical.
8. Except for those instances where officer safety or an investigation could be jeopardized and where reasonably possible and practical, the Sheriff's Office will notify the Department of Emergency Services, and should consider notifying the public.
9. Where there are specific and articulable grounds to believe that the sUAS will collect evidence of criminal activity and if the sUAS will be used in a manner that may intrude upon reasonable expectations of privacy, outside of exigent circumstances, the Sheriff's Office will confer with the State's Attorney's Office as to the applicability of obtaining a search warrant prior to conducting the flight.

### C. Restrictions on Using the sUAS

1. The sUAS shall be deployed and used only to support official law enforcement and public safety missions and is prohibited from being equipped with weapons of any kind.
2. The sUAS shall not be operated in an unsafe manner or in violation of FAA rules.
3. The Sheriff or his designee will be responsible to ensure Sheriff's Office sUAS policy is compliant with privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties standards.

### D. DME Retention and Management

1. Collection, use, dissemination, and retention of sUAS system-recorded data shall be limited to data legally acquired relevant to a Sheriff's Office operation.
2. All DME shall be handled in accordance with existing policy on data and record retention, where applicable.
3. All DME shall be securely downloaded at the completion of each mission. The sUAS-certified operators will record information for each file that shall include the date, time, location, and case reference numbers or other mission identifiers, and identify the sUAS personnel involved in mission.
4. The aforementioned DME data shall be downloaded to the "ccso uav data" drive on the secure county server. This drive is only accessible by command level personnel and sUAS pilots.
5. Personnel shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute in any manner sUAS DME without prior written authorization and approval of the Sheriff or his designee.
6. General observation data, information not focused on a specific individual(s) will be deleted after 30 days.

7. All access to sUAS DME must be specifically authorized by the Sheriff or his designee, and all access is to be audited to ensure that only authorized users are accessing the data for legitimate and authorized purposes.
8. Files shall be securely stored in accordance with agency policy as follows:
  - a) Avionics data will be retained indefinitely to document the history of where the drone was flown.
  - b) General observational data (information not focused on a specific individual or location), will be deleted after 30 days.
    1. All Sheriff's Office personnel will ensure images or videos of people incidentally recorded, that are not relevant to an operation, are not disseminated or viewed unnecessarily to protect individual rights.
  - c) Evidentiary data will be held in accordance with the Agency's established evidence retention policies.

#### E. sUAS Supervision and Reporting

1. sUAS supervisory personnel shall manage all deployments and uses of sUAS to ensure that personnel equipped with sUAS devices utilize them in accordance with policy and procedures defined herein.
2. The sUAS Training Coordinator will audit flight documentation at regular intervals. The results of the audit will be documented. Any changes to the flight time counter will be documented.
3. The Sheriff or his designee shall publish an annual report documenting the agency's deployment and use of sUAS devices.
4. Every effort shall be made to make publicly available Sheriff's Office Policies and Procedures that reflect respect for privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. However, it should be made clear that some information may not be able to be made publicly available base upon other legal, investigative, or operational security reasons.

## F. Training

1. Personnel who are assigned sUAS must complete an agency-approved 2 day training program taught by a Sheriff's Office instructor pilot to ensure proper use and operations.
2. Additional in-service flight training shall be required. All Sheriff's Office sUAS pilots will complete, at a minimum, a quarterly training mission under the supervision of a Sheriff's Office instructor pilot.
3. This in-service flight training will ensure the continued effective use and operation and proper calibration and performance of the equipment and to incorporate changes, updates, or other revisions in policy and equipment.
4. All personnel with sUAS responsibilities shall also be trained in the local and federal laws and regulations, as well as policies and procedures governing the deployment and use of sUAS.
5. All sUAS pilots will provide written acknowledgement that they have read and understand the Sheriff's Office sUAS policies, and all waivers granted by the FAA.