

**1321.00 UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (DRONES)**

<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	EVP-COO UC Operations
<b>Responsible Office:</b>	Systemwide Community Safety
<b>Issuance Date:</b>	[The date of issuance by the President]
<b>Effective Date:</b>	[The date that the Policy is first enforceable]
<b>Scope:</b>	The policies and procedures contained within constitute a directive for members of the University of California Police Department (UCPD). They were created to provide direction and guidance to the members of the UCPD and provide the framework of coordination for the protection of the population and resources of the University of California.

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**I. POLICY SUMMARY**

The Systemwide UCPD Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Policy establishes rules for the use of drones to enhance public safety and provide situational awareness during emergencies and investigations. Drones may be deployed in circumstances such as search and rescue, disaster response, hazardous incidents, critical investigations, and

other situations when other tools are less effective. Strict protocols govern training, flight authorization, documentation, and data retention.

All drone operations must comply with federal aviation regulations, state law, and UC policy. Officers are prohibited from using drones for random surveillance, personal business, or to monitor lawful activities. Chancellor or Chancellor designee approval is required to monitor lawful activities. The policy also explicitly prohibits weaponizing drones or using them for discriminatory or harassing purposes.

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## II. POLICY TEXT

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### *1321.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE*

The UC Police Department Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) will be used to assist first responders in enhancing public safety by providing an aerial perspective. This will be key to improved situational awareness in a multitude of situations. Deploying UAS with real-time video of high definition cameras and/or Forward Looking InfraRed (FLIR) systems will help detect dangers that otherwise may not be visible. The ability to provide this aerial view will enhance public and first responder safety. It will provide key information to leaders allowing officers leaders to make informed decisions regarding the deployment of resources, safety messaging to the public, etc.

The UAS used by the UC police departments qualify under the University of California Drone Policy as Small Unmanned Aircraft System (SUAS) which are unmanned aircraft weighing less than 55 lbs. and associated elements that are required to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.

The purpose of this policy is to establish protocol for the use of the Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) and for the storage, retrieval and dissemination of images and data captured by the UAS, including the retention and/or destruction of digital recordings obtained in accordance with applicable Federal law, State law, and University of California guidelines.

#### *1321.1.1 DEFINITIONS*

**Certificate of Authorization (COA):** Issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) granting permission to fly the UAS within specific boundaries and perimeters.

**Federal Aviation Administration:** The national aviation authority of the United States, with powers to regulate all aspects of the National Airspace System (NAS).

**Observer:** A member of the UC Police Department who is trained and authorized to maintain visual observation of the UAS while in flight.

**Pilot:** A member of the UC Police Department who is trained, certified and authorized to control a UAS during flight.

**UC UAS Policy:** The existing University of California Unmanned Aircraft System (Drone) Policy that establishes the University oversight and minimum record-keeping requirements for UAS. Establishes Designated Local Authorities at each University Location, and a Systemwide Designated UAS Authority to provide oversight.

**Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS):** An unmanned aircraft of any type that is capable of sustaining directed flight, whether preprogrammed or remotely controlled, and all the supporting or attached systems designed for gathering information through imaging, recording, or any other means. May also be referred to as a drone, Unmanned Aircraft System or an unmanned aircraft vehicle (UAV).

### *1321.2 POLICY*

Unmanned aircraft systems may be utilized to enhance the department's mission of protecting lives and property when other means and resources are not available or are less efficient. Any use of a UAS will be in strict accordance with constitutional and privacy rights under state and federal laws, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, and UC and department policies. Safety of all persons, above all else, is the primary concern in every operation, regardless of the nature of the mission.

All flight operations made by the Department are subject to Department protocols for pilot training, mission planning, impacts to privacy, flight authorization, flight documentation, accident or incident reporting and data management. A Program Coordinator will be appointed by the Chief of Police to develop appropriate protocols and manage the UAS Program.

### *1321.3 PRIVACY*

The use of the UAS involves important privacy considerations. Absent a warrant or exigent circumstances, operators and observers shall not intentionally record or transmit images of any location where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy (e.g., residence, yard, enclosure). Operators and observers shall take precautions to avoid inadvertently recording or transmitting images of areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy. Precautions can include, for example, deactivating or turning imaging devices away from such areas or persons during UAS operations.

### *1321.4 CHIEF OF POLICE*

The Chief of Police, or their designee is responsible for the following:

- Communicating the Department's commitment to safety, privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.
- Oversight of the UAS Program and reviewing periodic reports and audits on the program.

- Appointing a Program Coordinator who will be responsible for the management of the UAS Program.
- Approval of operators and observers.

#### 1321.4.1 PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The program coordinator appointed by the chief of police will ensure that policies and procedures conform to current laws, regulations, local ordinances and best practices and will have the following

- Coordinating the FAA Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) application process and ensuring that the COA is current.
- Ensuring that all authorized operators and required observers have completed all required FAA and department-approved training in the operation, applicable laws, policies and procedures regarding use of the UAS.
- Developing uniform protocol for submission and evaluation of requests to deploy a UAS, including urgent requests made during ongoing or emerging incidents.
- Developing protocol for conducting criminal investigations involving a UAS, including documentation of time spent monitoring a subject.
- Implementing a system for public notification of UAS deployment.
- Developing an operational protocol governing the deployment and operation of a UAS including, but not limited to, safety oversight, use of visual observers, establishment of lost link procedures and secure communication with air traffic control facilities.
- Developing a protocol for fully documenting all missions and reviewing flight mission reports for continual program improvement.
- Developing a quarterly UAS inspection, maintenance and record-keeping protocol to ensure continuing airworthiness of a UAS, up to and including its overhaul or life limits.
- Developing protocols to ensure that 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.
- Developing protocols that ensure retention and purge periods are maintained in accordance with established records retention schedules.
- Developing an appropriate standard for evaluating privacy considerations that are consistent with UC policy and the law.

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- Maintaining a central repository of the authorized protocols for the UAS Program.
- Coordinating with the [Director of Support Services] to ensure retention and purge periods are maintained in accordance with established records retention schedules.
- Facilitating law enforcement access to images and data captured by the UAS. Images and data access shall comply with the Body-Worn Camera policy.
- Recommending program enhancements, particularly regarding safety and information security.
- Ensuring that established protocols are followed by monitoring and providing periodic reports on the program to the Chief of Police or their designee.
- Maintaining familiarity with FAA regulatory standards and other federal laws, state laws and regulations, and local ordinances regarding the operations of a UAS.
- Assisting with the report and inventory for the Annual Military Equipment Policy (Military Equipment (AB481) policy)

**1321.5 DEPARTMENT PILOT**

Pilots are responsible for the safe and efficient conduct of their UAS flight operation. The Pilot is responsible for the following:

- Operating the Department UAS in a safe and secure manner according to all local, state and Federal regulations.
- Perform pre-flight and post-flight debriefings and safety checks of the UAS and other associated systems.
- Ensuring the safety of the flight crew (pilot and observer) and the general public during operation.
- Abide by Department Standards for evaluating privacy impacts
- Complying with Department protocols for deployment and documentation of flight missions.
- Submitting post-flight documentation, including any accident or injury reports.
- Ensuring that all flight crew members are qualified and sufficiently proficient for their position and the flight mission.
- Ensuring the completion and approval of appropriate documentation (flight waivers, airspace authorizations, etc.).

**1321.6 DEPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS AND PROCEDURE**

Requests to deploy Unmanned Aircraft Systems shall be forwarded to the Watch Commander or their designee for approval. Once approved by the Watch Commander or designee, only the authorized operator shall make the final determination whether to deploy or not.

Use of vision enhancement technology (e.g., thermal and other imaging equipment not generally available to the public) is permissible in viewing areas only where there is no protectable privacy interest or when in compliance with a search warrant or court order. In all other instances where there is no exception to a warrantless search, legal counsel should be consulted by the Watch Commander. The UAS shall be configured to be readily identifiable by the public by the appropriate use of markings.

Each deployment of the UAS shall be properly documented. Such documentation shall include, at a minimum, the date, operators(s), location, flight time, purpose of the deployment, and any accidents.

#### *1321.7 CREW TRAINING AND CURRENCY*

To ensure that the Department can operate at the highest level of safety and proficiency, only authorized operators who have completed and successfully passed the required initial training shall be permitted to operate Department UAS. The Program Coordinator is responsible for developing and authorizing training programs and requirements.

- All Pilots must complete an approved 'hands-on' basic flight training course that will incorporate at least 2 hours of flight time on Department aircraft under the direct supervision of an Authorized Training Operator.
- All Pilots must complete an approved Part 107 Knowledge Test Prep Course and Receive their FAA Remote Pilot Certificate with UAS rating prior to serving as an aircraft operator for any Department flight operation.
- All Pilots must complete a minimum of 2 hours of approved 'flight operation specific' training on the Standard Flight Operations described in Section 436.6. These training sessions must include instruction on the utilization of both the hardware and software required to execute the specified flight operation.
- Training and demonstration flights of the UAS shall be conducted over areas under Department control or a public use area.
- The regular use of Pilot skills is necessary to maintain the level of competence needed for professional flight operations. All Department Pilots must complete at least 1 hour of flight time every 90 days for each type of UAS they are tasked with utilizing in order to remain 'current.' A Pilot must be current in the platform, hardware, and software necessary to perform any assigned Department flight operation. Only authorized operators who have

completed and successfully passed the required initial training shall be permitted to operate the UAS.

#### **1321.8 USE OF UAS**

Only authorized operators who have completed the required training shall be permitted to operate UAS.

UAS operations should only be conducted under the FAA Regulations, part 107, unless a COA is obtained and otherwise specifies conditions for operation.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems may be authorized for deployment under the following circumstances:

- (a) Public safety and life preservation missions including, but not limited to, barricade situations, active shooters, apprehension of armed and dangerous fleeing suspects, and high-risk search warrants
- (b) Investigative scenes
- (c) Missing persons incidents
- (d) Traffic collision investigations and reconstruction
- (c) Search and rescue operations
- (d) Disaster scene incidents
- (e) Hazmat incidents
- (f) Suspected explosive devices
- (g) Pursuant to a warrant (search or arrest)
- (h) Special events, mass gatherings where security concerns exist or criminal activity is occurring.
- (i) Training or demonstration missions
- (j) Mutual aid support and outside law enforcement assists when the underlying missions meet the uses outlined in this policy

#### **1321.9 PROHIBITED USE**

The UAS video surveillance equipment shall not be used:

- To monitor gatherings, marches or protests where criminal activity is not reasonably likely unless approved by the chancellor or designee.

- To conduct random surveillance activities.
- To target a person based solely on actual or perceived characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, economic status, age, cultural group, or disability.
- To harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.
- Without a legitimate law enforcement purpose that is compliant with this policy.
- To conduct personal business of any type.

The UAS shall not be equipped with any type of weapon.

#### ***1321.10 RETENTION AND EVIDENCE COLLECTION***

Data collected by the UAS shall be retained as provided in the established records retention schedule and in accordance with UC Police Department Policy.

Any video or audio data collected by a UAS in the course of a flight which is relevant to a criminal investigation or critical incident shall be maintained in accordance with UC and Campus records retention policies. Any video or audio data that is not evidence or relevant to a criminal investigation or critical incident will be retained for 180 days before being destroyed.

- (a) Flight data to include but not limited to: GPS, speed, altitude, and path traveled will be retained as flight logs, either electronically or in print format.

#### ***1321.11 ACCIDENT REPORTING***

It is the policy of the Department that all Pilots must immediately report any UAS incident that results in injury or property damage to their Watch Commander or designee, and to the Designated Local Authority or Systemwide Designated UAS Authority as soon as possible. A report must be made regardless of whether damage to the object can be determined by the operator in the field.

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### **III. COMPLIANCE / RESPONSIBILITIES**

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Each Chief of Police has the responsibility to adopt and publish policies and procedures for the assistance and guidance of the members of their individual campus police departments. Policies and Procedures for campus police departments issued by authority of the Chief of Police shall have the same authority as these Policies.

Local regulations, including General and Special Orders, Procedural Memoranda and instructions may be written more restrictively than Policies Applying to University of



California Police Department, however they may not be written to supplant or diminish the Policies and Procedures contained within this Systemwide document

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#### IV. RELATED INFORMATION

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*FAA Website on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (US Specific):*

<https://www.faa.gov/UAS/>

*UC UAS Website:*

<https://www.ucop.edu/safety-and-loss-prevention/environmental/program-resources/unmanned-aircraft-systems-safety.html>

*UC UAS Policy:*

<https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/3500671/Drone>

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#### V. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Not applicable

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#### VI. REVISION HISTORY

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**January 2, 2026:** Original systemwide policy. This Policy is also reformatted to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0

**January 7, 2011:** Revised