



**Las Cruces Police Department  
GENERAL ORDERS  
FIELD OPERATIONS VOLUME 2  
GO-250 sUAS OPERATIONS  
Revised 7/10/2019**

**250 sUAS (Small Unmanned Aircraft System) Operations**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this General Order is to provide guidelines and operating procedures for the use of small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) within the Las Cruces Police Department.

**POLICY**

The deployment of small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) ("drones") by the Las Cruces Police Department is expected to assist as a force multiplier, providing increased situational awareness, improved cost-operating efficiently, and enhanced officer and public safety. Deployments of this technology will be in direct support of emergency events, crime scene and vehicular accident forensics collection, tactical operations, officer training, firefighting support activities, disaster response and any other mission requiring aerial surveillance within a defined incident perimeter.

The use of sUAS by the Las Cruces Police Department is expected to improve response and investigation activities. sUAS operations may be integrated with manned aircraft operations if it provides the most effective response to specific situations.

**APPLICABILITY**

This General Order Applies to all employees.

**REFERENCES**

- New Mexico Municipal League - NMML OPR.06.06
- SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS - sUAS 14 CFR Part 107

**DEFINITIONS**

**14 CFR Part 107:** The small UAS rule to allow for routine civil operation, to include public safety, of sUAS in the National Airspace System (NAS) and provides safety rules for those operations. The rule defines sUAS as unmanned aircraft weighing less than 55 pounds.

**Pilot-in-Command (PIC):** The person who is qualified and designated by the agency who is directly responsible for and is the final authority as to the operation of the sUAS (as



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described by Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR ~Part 91.3); and holds the appropriate FAA sUAS airman certificate (if applicable) for the conduct of the flight.

**Safety Officer:** The Safety Officer is responsible for assisting the PIC with safety-related issues and providing support to the PIC during sUAS operations. The Safety Officer will act as the liaison officer for coordination with the incident commander, on-scene commander or special response personnel on behalf of the PIC. An Observer can fulfill the responsibilities of the Safety Officer.

**Small Unmanned Aircraft:** A small unmanned aircraft with a maximum takeoff weight (aircraft and payload) less than 55 lb. (25 kg).

**Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS):** A small unmanned aircraft and all of its associated elements, accessories, etc. (i.e., telemetry links, payload elements and control interfaces (Ground Control Station, antennas, avionics equipment, etc.) that are required for the safe and efficient operation of the small unmanned aircraft in the national airspace system.

**Visual Observer (VO):** A person who is designated by the agency and/or PIC to assist the pilot in command (the person manipulating the flight controls).

## **250.01 PROCEDURE**

A. Authority -- All deployments of the small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) will require the authorization of the Shift Supervisor or designee.

1. The Department will obtain all applicable authorizations, permits, or certificates required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prior to deploying or operating the sUAS. These authorizations, permits, and certificates will be maintained and current. The Chief of Police will designate the person responsible for this function.

B. Authorized Use -- The Department will utilize the sUAS to provide an aerial perspective in responding to public safety emergencies, for law enforcement purposes or exigent circumstances. Potential uses include, but are not limited to:

1. Situational Awareness -- To assist law enforcement decision-makers in understanding the nature, scale, scope of an incident and for planning and coordinating an effective response.



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2. Search and Rescue -- To assist missing person investigations, AMBER Alerts, Silver Alerts, and other search and rescue missions.
  3. Scene Documentation -- To document crime scenes, crash scenes, or other major incidents.
  4. Visual Perspective -- To provide an aerial visual perspective to assist the Department in providing direction for crowd control, traffic incident management, special circumstances, and temporary perimeter security.
  5. Tactical Deployment -- To support the tactical deployment of officers and equipment in emergency situations. (e.g., incidents involving hostages and barricaded persons, or support for large scale tactical operations).
- C. Authorized Operators -- The sUAS will only be operated by department personnel who have been trained and certified in the operation of the system.
- D. Criminal Investigation Authorization -- When the sUAS will be utilized for a Criminal Investigation involving potential 4th Amendment issues, the investigating officer will notify and consult the Dona Ana County District Attorney's Office. If a search warrant is required, the investigator will follow standard operating procedures.

**250.02 TRAINING**

Officers selected to be Unmanned Aircraft Pilots will be required to complete department-approved training. The training will consist of at a minimum:

- A. Training that includes flight operations and ground station operations.
- B. Online training and FAA Remote Pilot Certification (Part 107).
- C. Proficiency Training -- Unmanned Aircraft Pilots will ensure that they continue training and education to remain proficient in all aspects of flight operations.

**250.03 PRE-DEPLOYMENT OPERATIONS**

Prior to deployment of the sUAS for any operation, the Pilot in Command (PIC) will complete the following:



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- A. Obtain authorization from the Shift Supervisor or designee for operations other than training.
- B. Perform a pre-flight inspection of the Small Unmanned Aircraft.
- C. Make any required notifications of the planned flight.
- D. When being utilized for a criminal investigation involving potential 4th amendment issues, absent exigent circumstances consistent with 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment exceptions, the pilot will view the approved warrant.

**250.04 FLIGHT OPERATIONS**

The Pilot in Command (PIC) will ensure the following during flight operations:

- A. The flight complies with all applicable FAA rules and regulations under Part 107.
- B. The flight complies with all Federal and State laws.
- C. The flight is conducted safely by assessing the operating environment that should include the local weather conditions, local airspace, any flight restrictions, the location of persons and property on the surface and other ground hazards. The Pilot in Command (PIC) has the ultimate authority to deploy or not deploy the small unmanned aircraft once the above factors have been evaluated.
- D. Be responsible for any recordings in accordance with department policy.
- E. Maintain the ability to track and record the flight pattern and location of the small unmanned aircraft.
- F. Requests for assistance of the Las Cruces Police Department sUAS Unit from outside agencies will be directed to the Chief of Police or designee. If the request is granted, the Pilot in Command will be guided by the procedures outlined in this General Order.

**250.05 POST DEPLOYMENT OPERATIONS**

The Pilot in Command will complete the following upon completion of any flight.

- A. Perform inspections of all equipment and note any damages.



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- B. Ensure the small unmanned aircraft is returned to the designated storage location.
- C. Ensure a supplement report is generated and or a case number logged.
- D. Ensure any recorded Digital Multimedia Evidence is downloaded and entered into evidence.

**250.06 RESTRICTIONS**

- A. Weapons -- The small unmanned aircraft will not be equipped with any weapons of any kind.
  - 1. Flight Operations -- The Unmanned Aircraft System will not be deployed unless a PIC and a safety officer are present for the entire flight. A Visual Observer can assist the PIC and preform the necessary functions of the Safety Officer, if a Safety Officer is unavailable.

**250.07 DIGITAL MULTIMEDIA RECORDINGS**

Flight Recordings -- All flight recordings are the property of the Las Cruces Police Department and will be reviewed, copied or destroyed in accordance with General Order 151 Recording Devices. The digital multimedia recordings will be considered evidence. All rules of evidence will adhere to G.O. 300 Evidence and Property.

**250.08 MAINTENANCE, REPAIR, and DAMAGE**

- A. Maintenance and Repair - Most problems with the sUAS can be handled by the officers that have been trained in the operation of the equipment utilizing the information they received during their training. Any problems that cannot be corrected will be documented citing details of the malfunction or problem and submitted through the Chain of Command.
- B. Damage - When damage occurs (or is discovered) to any component of the sUAS, it will be documented on a Notice of Accident or the appropriate city form and forwarded through the chain of command.