



San Diego County Sheriff

Training Bulletin

William D. Gore, Sheriff

November 2015



The following training bulletin was written to give guidance when dealing with drones, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) or Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). The amount of UAS incidents has increased dramatically over the past year. This type of technology is growing faster than existing laws and our policies. Please utilize discretion when handling any UAS radio call or contact. Does your contracted city have a municipal code pertaining to UAS and if so, what is its intended purpose? Your judgment in each situation is paramount. Ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) What crime is being committed?
- 2) Are you able to locate the UAS operator?
- 3) Is the UAS operator in a place he/she has the right to be?
- 4) Is the UAS operator using the UAS for recreational or commercial use?
- 5) Are the UAS and or the UAS operator interfering with law enforcement operations (Wild Fires, SED missions, flying near ASTREA or interfering with a crime scene)?
- 6) Has the local airport called to report a UAS in the air, causing the grounding of flights?

Use of a UAS other than recreational is considered commercial use. There is currently very little regulation on flying UAS for recreation use. This may change, but for now in most cases there are very limited options law enforcement can use to prevent someone from flying one. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires specific certifications and licenses in order to operate a UAS for commercial use. The FAA classifies a UAS as an aircraft. See below links for Federal laws that govern UAS use specific to airports, other aircraft and a link to the types of UAS operations:

[Different types of UAS Operations.](#)

[14 C.F.R. § 91.13](#) - applies if operated in close proximity to other aircraft, personnel on the ground, or if it crashes.

[18 U.S.C. § 32\(a\) \(5\)](#) could apply if it can be determined the operator willfully flew the drone with the intention of interfering with the flight crew

*This Training Bulletin was written by Sergeant Chris Steffen from the Division of Inspectional Services. If you have any information or expertise in a specific area and would like to write a training bulletin, please contact Corporal Daniel Gutierrez at the L.E. In-Service Training Unit (858)505-6598, or email [Daniel.Gutierrez@sdsheriff.org](mailto:Daniel.Gutierrez@sdsheriff.org).*



San Diego County Sheriff

Training Bulletin

William D. Gore, Sheriff

November 2015



If you are able to locate the UAS operator and determine the UAS is being utilized to violate a federal law or interfere with law enforcement operations, attempt to gain voluntary compliance first. The "Spirit of the Law" is a key factor when dealing with UAS incidents and the related evolving statutes.

If you obtain compliance, get information from the UAS operator to complete a thorough field interview with photographs. If the UAS operator is refusing to comply with your request to stop flying the UAS, you may decide to arrest for 148(a) (1) PC. If an arrest is made, consider cite and release or notify warrant options when appropriate.

When making an arrest, ensure you obtain the UAS and all operating equipment as evidence. Use proper evidence procedures when obtaining the UAS and operational equipment.

If making an arrest, the UAS operator might refuse to ground the UAS. If this occurs, most UAS have a "return to home" feature which will typically ground the UAS at the sight of the initial launch. Most hobbyists' UAS have a battery life of 20 to 40 minutes; so you may need to wait on scene until the UAS grounds itself. Sheriff's Personnel should not attempt to take over flight control and land or pilot a suspect's UAS.

For further FAA regulation information on UAS please see below links and contact information:

[FAA Law Enforcement Assistance Program \(LEAP\)](#)

[Law Enforcement Guidance for Unauthorized UAS Operations](#)

Special Agent, Michael Bumberger

FAA Investigations &LEAP

(310) 725-3737.

If you have any further questions about UAS and the steps to take on enforcement contacts, please call Lt. Jason Vickery or Lt. Rich Williams.

If a field interview is conducted or a citation/arrest is made, forward the case information to Lt. Jason Vickery or Lt. Rich Williams.

[Jason.Vickery@sdsheriff.org](mailto:Jason.Vickery@sdsheriff.org) (951) 970-5938

[Richard.Williams@sdsheriff.org](mailto:Richard.Williams@sdsheriff.org) (619) 840-0636.

Please remember, The Sheriff's Department and FAA are focused on education rather than enforcement. Please exercise the "Spirit of the Law" when handling all UAS incidents.

*This Training Bulletin was written by Sergeant Chris Steffen from the Division of Inspectional Services. If you have any information or expertise in a specific area and would like to write a training bulletin, please contact Corporal Daniel Gutierrez at the L.E. In-Service Training Unit (858)505-6598, or email [Daniel.Gutierrez@sdsheriff.org](mailto:Daniel.Gutierrez@sdsheriff.org).*