

**Country Club Hills Police Department
Law Enforcement
Policies and Procedures**

Subject: Drone Operations Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)	Policy Number: 5.49
Issue Date: 3/01/2026	Revision Date:
Approval Authority Title and Signature:	Malcolm J. White Chief of Police 

POLICY:

Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), more commonly referred to as drones, may be utilized by the Country Club Hills Police Department to enhance the City and Police Department's mission of protecting lives and property when other means and resources are not available or are less effective. Only trained agency personnel may deploy and pilot small, unmanned aircraft system(s) in accordance with this policy.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Digital Multimedia Evidence (DME):** Digital recording of images, sounds, and associated data.
- **Unmanned Aircraft (UA), Drone, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV):** An aircraft that is intended to navigate in the air without an on-board pilot.
- **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.
- **Unmanned Aircraft Systems Coordinator (UASC):** Sworn personnel of the Country Club Hills Police Department responsible for overseeing the Unmanned Aircraft System Program.
- **UAS Flight Crewmember:** A visual observer or other person assigned duties for a UAS for the purpose of flight or training exercise.
- **Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC):** A person exercising control over a UA/UAV/UAS during flight.

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DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines and procedures governing the utilization of the Country Club Hills Police Departments small, unmanned aircraft system.

It is the policy of the Country Club Hills Police Department that only duly trained and authorized agency personnel may deploy and pilot small unmanned aircraft system(s) when such use is appropriate in the performance of their official duties or training, and where deployment and use, and the collection and use of any audio/video recordings or other data originating from or generated by the small unmanned aircraft system(s), conform with the policy provisions provided herein and applicable law (Freedom from Drone Surveillance Act (725 ILCS 167)).

PROCEDURE:

DEPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

- A. The Country Club Hills Police Department shall obtain applicable authorizations, permits, or certificates required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prior to deploying or operating the Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (**sUAS**), and these authorizations, permits, and certificates shall be maintained and current by the department UASC.
- B. The sUAS will be operated only by RPIC Aircraft Pilot(s) who have been trained and certified in the operation of the system.
- C. Only 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.
- D. The sUAS equipment is the responsibility of RPIC Flight Crewmember and will be used with reasonable care to ensure proper functioning.
 - 1. Equipment malfunctions shall be brought to the attention of the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Coordinator (USAC).
 - 2. Damage to sUAS will be reported in writing to the USAC and Deputy Chief within 24 hours of such damage occurring.
- E. The sUAS equipment and all data, images, video, and metadata captured, recorded, or otherwise produced by the equipment is the sole property of the department. Any evidence obtain will be stored within department policy and procedures.

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- F. Official deployments will be documented in an applicable written report and all flight time shall be accurately recorded.
1. Each deployment of the sUAS shall include information regarding the reason for the flight; date and time, and location of the flight;
 2. Supervisor shall be notified of deployment and the staff assigned.
 3. A summary of the activities covered, actions taken, and outcomes from the deployment.
 4. Training deployments shall be logged.
- G. Except for those instances where officer safety or investigation could be jeopardized and where reasonably possible and practical, the department will notify the public in the general area of the deployment. This may be accomplished by the City of Country Club Hills social media page or reverse 911.

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS COORDINATOR (USAC)

- A. The maintaining and renewing of any FAA Certificate of Authorization (COA) shall be the responsibility of the USAC.
1. The USAC shall ensure that officers equipped with sUAS device(s) utilize them in accordance with policy and procedures defined herein.
 2. The USAC will audit flight documentation at regular intervals
 3. USAC shall report in writing on an annual basis and not later than April 1 of each year to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority of the number of sUAS that the County Club Hills Police Department owns (725 ILCS 167/35). This report will also be tendered to the Deputy Chief of Police.

DEPLOYMENT PROCEDURES

- A. Notification of all deployments of sUAS must be made to the USAC. Outside agency immediate request or callouts for sUAS shall be specifically authorized by the USAC, his designee or a sworn supervisor prior to deployment of sUAS.
- B. The sUAS shall be deployed and used only to support official law enforcement and public safety missions.

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- C. In accordance with Freedom from Drone Surveillance Act (725 ILCS 167), the Country Club Hills Police Departments use of a sUAS to gather information is prohibited unless it meets one or more of the criteria described in the Freedom from Drone Surveillance Act.

NIGHT-TIME OPERATIONS

- A. The primary takeoff/landing area will have a perimeter marked with four (4) orange cones or flares in a perimeter of 30 feet surrounding the illuminated landing pad.
- B. During any flight operations that take place during the night, the flight crew will consist of a PIC (pilot-in command) and a VO (visual observer).
- C. No persons are to be inside of the perimeter without the authorization of the RPIC.
- D. The sUAS will be flown within line-of-sight by the RPIC for the entire duration of the flight.
1. The RPIC and VO will maintain communication by direct contact, police radio systems, or cellular telephone at all times.
 2. At no time will the RPIC continue flight operations if the sUAS is not in the line of sight and are unable to determine its position, orientation, altitude or the environment around the sUAS.
 3. The RPIC and VO will be familiar with the minimum safe altitudes and weather conditions and determine any structures or hazards prior to flight operations taking place.
 4. Safe alternate landing area will be identified in the event the sUAS cannot be recovered to the takeoff point.
 5. The sUAS shall be equipped with lights that are visible 360 degrees for a minimum of 3 statute miles at night.
- E. The RPIC will utilize a visual camera when operating an illuminated area, or when operating with an installed spotlight system that illuminates the ground, or FLIR camera when so equipped.
- F. In the event of a lost control link, the sUAS is equipped with a GPS enabled return-to-home (RTH) system that will record the initial takeoff location for automated return, and landing if required.

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- G. If another aircraft, sUAS or manned, is encountered during flight operations occurring during DAY or NIGHT, the sUAS will immediately be maneuvered by the RPIC to position that does not cause hazard to the other aircraft, persons or vehicles on the ground or any structure.

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (FAA) OPERATIONAL LIMITATIONS

- A. Flight operations shall be visual line-of-sight (VLOS) only. At all times, sUAS must remain close enough to the operator or visual observer (VO) to see the aircraft with vision unaided by any device other than corrective lenses.
- B. The sUAS may not operate over any person(s) not directly involved in the operation.
- C. Daylight operations (official sunrise to official sunset, local time) are only authorized unless nighttime waiver acquired.
- D. The sUAS must yield right-of-way to other aircraft, manned or unmanned.
- E. The use of a VO is suggested but not required.
- F. First-person view camera cannot satisfy “see-and-avoid” requirement but can be used as long as requirement is satisfied in other ways.
- G. The sUAS shall not exceed a maximum airspeed of 100 mph (87 knots).
- H. The sUAS must remain below an altitude of 400 feet above ground level.
- I. The sUAS shall only operate when the minimum weather visibility is 3 miles or greater from the control station.
- J. No UAS Flight Crewmember may operate more than one unmanned aircraft operation at one time.
- K. A preflight inspection of sUAS by a UAS Flight Crewmember is required before flight.
- L. UAS Flight Crewmembers must stay out of airport flight paths and restricted airspace areas, and obey any FAA.
- M. All sUAS operations shall take place in In Class G Airspace; and
 - 1. Shall not operate within five (5) nautical miles (NM) from an airport having an operational control tower; or

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2. Three (3) NM from an airport having a published instrument flight procedure, but not having an operational control tower; or
3. Two (2) NM from an airport not having a published instrument flight procedure or an operational

RESTRICTIONS

- A. The sUAS shall not be operated in an unsafe manner, in violation of the Freedom from Drone Surveillance Act (725 ILCS 167) and/or FAA rules.
- B. The sUAS shall not be equipped with weapons of any kind.
- C. The sUAS shall not be modified in any manner from the manufacture's specifications or fitted with additional equipment without the authorization of the Chief of Police or his designee.

DIGITAL MULTIMEDIA EVIDENCE (DME) RETENTION AND DISCLOSURE

- A. Retention
 1. All DME shall be securely downloaded at the completion of each official deployment. The sUAS certified operators will record information for each file that shall include the date; time, location, and case report number(s) and identify sUAS operator(s) involved in the mission.
 2. If the department uses sUAS, the department within 30 days shall destroy all information gathered by the sUAS, except that a supervisor may retain particular information if:
 - i. There is reasonable suspicion that the information contains evidence of criminal activity, or
 - ii. The information is relevant to an ongoing investigation or pending criminal trial (725 ILCS 167/20).
- B. Disclosure
 1. If the department uses sUAS, the department shall not disclose any information gathered by the sUAS, except that a supervisor may disclose particular information to another government agency, if:
 - i. Reasonable suspicion is established that the information contains evidence of criminal activity, or
 - ii. The information is relevant to an ongoing investigation or pending criminal trial (725 ILCS 167/25).

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- iii. Officers shall not edit, alter, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute in any manner sUAS aircraft system DME

TRAINING

- A. Police personnel who are assigned sUAS must pass a Part 107 FAA license exam and complete a department approved training program to ensure proper use and operations.
- B. All training flight operations will take place on public property and the recording of any flight data shall be for the sole purpose of gaining an understanding of the features of the sUAS.
- C. Additional training may be required at periodic intervals to 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.
- D. All department personnel with sUAS responsibilities shall also be trained in the local, state, and federal laws and regulations, as well as policies and procedures governing the deployment and use of the sUAS(s).

ANNUAL REPORTING

The USAC shall provide an annual report to the Chief of Police outlining the number of deployments in the field, locations of the incidents, applicable case report numbers, and any unusual circumstances surrounding the deployments during the preceding calendar year.

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