Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS)

609.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is 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 the procedures provided herein and applicable law.

609.2 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

A. **Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)** - This federal agency is responsible for regulating the control of all aircraft and pilots in the U.S., including unmanned aircraft systems.

B. **Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS)** - An unmanned aircraft weighing less than fifty-five pounds that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft, along with the associated systems required for safe and efficient operation in the national airspace.

C. **14 CFR Part 107** - The section of the Code of Federal Regulations that governs the operation of sUAS and provides safety rules for those operations.

D. **Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC)** - Is a person who holds an FAA remote pilot certificate and has the final authority and responsibility for the operation and safety of an sUAS operation. The RPIC is the person tasked to pilot the sUAS during flight operations.

E. **Visual Observer (VO)** - A person who is designated by the RPIC to assist in maintaining a visual line of sight of the unmanned aircraft to see and avoid other air traffic or objects aloft or on the ground.

F. **Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA)** - An authorization issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to a public operator for a specific UAS. After a complete application is submitted, the FAA conducts a comprehensive operational and technical review. If necessary, provisions or limitations may be imposed as part of the approval to ensure the UAS can operate safely with other airspace users.

609.3 POLICY

It is the policy of the Town of DeWitt Police Department that duly trained and authorized agency personnel may deploy sUAS when such use is appropriate in the performance of their official duties.

Any use of a UAS will be in strict accordance with constitutional and privacy rights, as well as Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations.

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2026/07/16, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by DeWitt Police Department

609.4 PRIVACY

A. Department-owned, sUAS shall be used to support official public safety operations in a constitutionally and legally sound manner.

B. sUAS missions shall not be authorized to conduct surveillance of citizens inside their homes, places of worship, or within the closed confines of their property or other locations where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy, without first obtaining a search warrant. The only exception shall be when exigent circumstances exist based upon reasonable suspicion that swift action is necessary to prevent imminent danger to human life.

C. While operating an sUAS, the RPIC will avoid recording data over locations where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy while an sUAS is transiting from one location to another.

609.5 PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The Chief of Police will appoint a program coordinator who will be responsible for managing the UAS program. The program coordinator will ensure that policies and procedures conform to current laws, regulations, and best practices and will have the following additional responsibilities:

- 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 a uniform protocol for submission and evaluation of requests to deploy a UAS, including urgent requests made during ongoing or emerging incidents. All department UAS – except training missions – should be authorized by a Command Officer and conform to a Certificate of Authorization (COA) and/or Part 107 mission. The Command Officer must confer with a Part 107 Remote Pilot holding a Small Unmanned Aircraft System rating. Except when impractical, a Remote Pilot holding a Small Unmanned Aircraft System rating should be present on the scene during missions.
- Developing a 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 comprehensively documenting all missions.
- Developing a 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 is accessed, maintained, stored, and retrieved in a manner that ensures its integrity as

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2026/07/16, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by DeWitt Police Department

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.
- Facilitating law enforcement access to images and data captured by the UAS.
- 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.

609.6 AUTHORIZED USES OF SUAS

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

The use of vision enhancement technology (e.g., thermal and other imaging equipment not generally available to the public) is permissible in viewing areas only when there is no protectable privacy interest or when in compliance with a search warrant or court order. In all other instances, consult with legal counsel.

sUAS operations should be flown in accordance with an approved FAA Facility Map.

The Town of DeWitt Police Department has authorized the use of the sUAS to provide an aerial perspective in responding to emergencies involving exigent circumstances and for the following specific public safety missions:

(a) **Situational Awareness:** To assist decision makers (e.g., incident command staff, first responders, and appropriate governmental officials) in understanding the nature, scale, and scope of an incident and for planning and coordinating an adequate response.

(b) **Demonstration Purposes:** When it would benefit the department to provide a demonstration of sUAS capabilities and when the demonstration has been authorized.

(c) **Training:** To provide documentation of department training activities that would assist in training objectives.

(d) **Critical Incident Response Planning** : To assist in preparing for the response to a natural or man-made disaster (e.g., damage survey, pre-planning, etc.).

(e) **Large Area Search:** To search for property (e.g., lost, stolen, used in crime) when the property may reasonably be located in an area where a visual aerial perspective would benefit the search, such as a remote or inaccessible area.

(f) **Scene Documentation:** To document a crime scene, accident scene, or other major incident scenes (e.g., disaster management, incident response, large-scale forensic scene investigation).

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2026/07/16, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by DeWitt Police Department

(g) **Visual Perspective:** To provide an aerial visual perspective to assist officers in providing direction for crowd control, traffic incident management, special circumstances, temporary perimeter security, hazardous materials response, train derailments, or any other incident where an aerial visual perspective would support the public safety operations of the department.

(h) **Tactical Deployment:** To support the tactical deployment of officers and equipment in emergencies (e.g., incidents involving hostages, armed barricaded subjects, active shooter response, or support for large-scale tactical operations and other temporary perimeter security situations).

(i) **Search and Rescue** : To assist in locating critically missing persons, during AMBER Alerts, Silver Alerts, and other search and rescue missions.

609.7 PROHIBITED USES OF SUAS

The sUAS shall not be:

(a) Deployed or used other than in support of official public safety missions.

(b) Operated in an unsafe manner or in violation of FAA rules.

(c) Operated in a manner that violates any portion of this order or applicable law.

(d) 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.

(e) To harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.

(f) To conduct personal business of any type.

(g) Equipped with weapons.

(h) Used in combination with facial recognition software.

(i) Operated outside of the guidelines listed in Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) Flight Operations Manual.

The sUAS shall not be weaponized.

609.8 TRAINING

(a) Every RPIC shall possess a valid FAA Remote Pilot Certificate and shall be responsible for re-certifying as required by the FAA.

(b) An RPIC shall be required to successfully complete an applicable training course that includes flight operations before being allowed to conduct any sUAS mission.

(c) Every RPIC shall be required to demonstrate proficiency during flight maneuvers while complying with all procedures contained herein, FAA regulations, and applicable laws.

(d) All other personnel assigned to the sUAS unit (camera operator, visual observer) shall receive applicable training before participating in sUAS missions and shall demonstrate proficiency as required.

Copyright Lexipol, LLC 2026/07/16, All Rights Reserved.
Published with permission by DeWitt Police Department