



Departmental Memorandum

Volume 24-12

To: All Uniformed Personnel
From: Captain Brent Kaneyuki, Metro Division

Katherine Lester, Chief of Police

UAS Deployment and Drone as First Responder (DFR) Trial Program

11-19-2024

The purpose of this departmental memorandum is to provide an update for UAS deployments and share information and guidelines for the Drone as First Responder (DFR) trial program. As such, this memorandum expires upon publication of General Order 525.09 (Uncrewed Aerial Systems [UAS], last revised 06-28-2023) and completion of the trial DFR program period.

Effectively immediately, sergeants are authorized to approve the use of UAS in accordance with the deployment guidelines of General Order 525.09, sections C., 1, 3., 4., 5., and 6.

DFR is a newer concept in public safety that utilizes small uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) as a force-multiplier and de-escalation tool. Small uncrewed aerial systems are dispatched to calls for service from a fixed location to provide overwatch before public safety arrives on scene, verifies information, or searches the area.

The Sacramento Police Department (SPD), in partnership with the Sacramento Fire Department (SFD), will conduct a Drone as First Responder (DFR) Trial Program. Using a data-driven approach to assess call volume, crime analysis research, and present use on patrol, officers selected for the DFR trial will be assigned to work Wednesday through Saturday, 1000-2000 hours, for approximately two weeks. The trial is projected to occur from mid-November through mid-December but may be extended if weather conditions don't permit use. It will be based at SFD Station 20 (2512 Rio Linda Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95815). This central location will allow approximately two miles of response area with limited intrusion into the airports and other flight concerns. Deployments will handle calls in the areas of the north and central city.

A DFR unit may be dispatched on calls for service along with or instead of SPD or SFD units for this time frame. The DFR trial will monitor the SFD radio channel and SFD will be able to raise the pilot if needed. The DFR pilot has been invited to self-dispatch to all SFD calls and will focus on those from Station 20. DFR will not replace Air Operations but will complement it. After this DFR pilot program, SPD will review the results to determine how we will proceed.

The DFR officer will have discretion to respond to calls for service (subject to cancelation by a sergeant or above) so that the UAS can be deployed on many types of incidents. Similar to a patrol officer, the DFR unit may also be preempted for a call where it may be used more effectively.

This concept is new to SPD, and challenges are expected. As an adjunct to the DFR trial, a certificate of authorization (CoA) to fly up to two miles from Station 20 has been obtained, but there are parameters in which the UAS pilots are required to fly. Below is a map that shows the radius. However, there may be factors that limit the DFR response distance. Additionally, the numbers in the grid boxes on the map show the maximum operational altitude in feet (not more than 400 feet) in those areas due to potential obstacles.

Officer safety is a prime reason for the DFR trial, and having a UAS on scene to provide critical updates to responding patrol officers and fire personnel can enhance it greatly. Additionally, responding officers and SFD personnel can view DFR video from their vehicles or cellular devices while enroute to a call for service,

