

Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (i.e., Drones)

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the Naperville Police Department use drones?

Drones provide an aerial perspective that can help officers and first responders respond more safely and effectively during specific public-safety situations.

Are drones used for routine surveillance?

No. Drones are not used for random or unrestricted surveillance, and department policy prohibits targeting individuals based solely on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

Are drone flights recorded?

Yes. All flights are recorded, but not all footage is retained. Drone footage is generally only saved when evidence is captured or the information is deemed relevant to an ongoing investigation or pending criminal trial. The handling and storage of recordings follow strict chain-of-custody and evidence policies.

Can drones use facial recognition?

NPD does not use onboard facial recognition software during drone flights.

Illinois law prohibits law enforcement agencies from using onboard facial recognition software in conjunction with a drone during a flight. Illinois law also strictly limits the circumstances in which information gathered by a drone may subsequently be used with facial recognition technology.

NPD complies with those restrictions.

How is my privacy protected?

Drone operations are conducted in compliance with all federal and state laws and regulations. Additionally, department policy prohibits the use of drones to:

- Conduct random surveillance activities or for information gathering, unless a search warrant has been issued.
- Target a person based solely on individual characteristics such as, but not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation.
- Harass, intimidate or discriminate against any individual or group.
- Conduct personal business of any type.

How long is drone video kept?

Information is retained or destroyed according to Illinois law and department policy. In most circumstances, information must be destroyed within 30 days. Information collected at routed or special events is generally subject to a 24-hour deletion requirement, with limited exceptions.

Who operates the drones?

Drones are operated by trained department personnel who maintain FAA Part 107 certification and participate in ongoing department training and proficiency testing.

Who has access to the videos and photographs?

Authorized department personnel have access to the videos and photos. Access is logged and auditable. State law (725 ILCS 167/25) prohibits us from releasing the photos and videos to anyone except to another government agency when there is reasonable suspicion that the information contains evidence of criminal activity, or the information is relevant to an ongoing investigation or pending criminal trial.

What happens if a drone is misused?

Any suspected misuse of drone technology is reviewed and investigated. Misuse may result in disciplinary action and criminal prosecution when applicable.