

Frequently Asked Questions

What would SRPD use the drones for?

Uses could include:

- Search and Rescue, searching for missing persons
- Assisting in the capture of armed, dangerous, or fleeing criminal suspects
- Protecting residents and officers by providing aerial view during dangerous incidents
- Crime scene preservation & documentation
- Disaster response & recovery
- Training, marketing/outreach, community engagement events
- Assisting the Santa Rosa Fire Department and other allied agencies with fire suppression and investigation

What would be prohibited?

- Weaponization of drones
- General surveillance

Who will be operating the drones?

- Only trained employees who are certified by the FAA as remote pilots and undergo department-specific training.

How would SRPD protect individual privacy?

- General surveillance would be prohibited
- Operations that might infringe on a person's reasonable expectation of privacy would be prohibited without a search warrant or exigent circumstances
- Flights would require approval of a supervisor or manager
- All constitutional law would apply to drone operations

What will it cost?

- The DJI Phantom and Mavic drones in use now cost approximately \$1500 - \$3000. A more capable drone with thermal cameras and higher quality optical cameras could cost \$30,000. Operating costs are negligible.
- Other agencies, like Modesto PD, have created a robust program for under \$50,000.
- The purchase price of a helicopter, by contrast, is \$4M - \$5M, and the operating costs are measured in the hundreds or thousands of dollars per hour.
- SRPD's Drone Program has not increased our staffing needs or impacted the City's general fund budget.