



DFR Drone Policy for Communities

Drone use by Police, Fire, and Emergency services has the potential to significantly improve community safety. The benefits include better response times and working within the realities of personnel shortages and budget constraints.

However Public Safety drone use without Community support will be a non-starter or worse lead to damaged trust between First Responders and the Community.

Here are the 3 primary issues for most community members:

- I do not want drones on or above my property.
- I do not want drones doing surveillance outside of emergencies.
- When I see a drone, I want to know who owns it, why it is present, and be assured that it is operating responsibly.

To achieve Community Trust We recommend the following 10 Rules be proposed by Public Safety Professionals, and be reviewed and approved by elected community officials

DFR Drone Neighborhood Guidelines:

1. **Operate only over streets:** Drones operating over streets avoid the problem of (a) being over homes and private property, (b) being over schools, churches, and public assembly property, (c) being over parks and recreational facilities. Also operating over a street gives the impression that the drone is going to some place for some specific purpose.
2. **ID by flashing red/blue light:** Drones are required to have flashing beacons and a blue or red beacon identifies it as a public safety drone operating for a specific purpose.
3. **Land only at established hanger:** Drones should operate from a fixed hanger location at an established police, fire, or other public safety facility. This builds community knowledge and trust. Mobile drone operations are unpredictable for the community.
4. **Minimum 100 feet aboveground:** Drones operating at low elevations will likely cause some sense of danger to people. The 100 feet elevation avoids that perception and allows the drone to operate above tree level, while under the 200-400 feet allowable maximum.

5. **No fly zone over private property:** Drones should not operate over private property unless it is a point of the emergency incident. Also drones should not operate over schools, churches, public assembly areas, or parks.
6. **No surveillance – incident response only:** Drone use should be restricted to incident response and training. Any indication of general surveillance will detract from public trust and will likely be subject to challenge with civil liberties concerns.
7. **Designated training hours weekly with defined operating area:** Training is essential and will also build trust with the community. Training operations should be scheduled and the public should be notified in community newspapers and otherwise as to the days and times when training will take place.
8. **No Data Retention except at Point of Incident.** The community should be assured that no drone recording of video will be established except at the point of the incident. The community policy may also specify the retention period for video at point of incident if not valid for approved purposes such as evidence or training.
9. **Written DFR drone policy approved by community elected officials.** These DFR Drone Guidelines should be specifically adopted by community elected officials. Lack of a clear standard will damage trust between the community and First Responders.
10. **Annual audit of drone policy conformance.** The DFR drone operations record should be examined at least annually for performance improvement and community reporting.