

DOCKED DRONE PROGRAM

The Docked Drone Program (DDP) is an evolution of the Saint Paul Police Department's current unmanned aircraft system (UAS) program, aimed at enhancing the safety of officers and our community. The DDP deploys a remotely piloted aircraft after receiving a high priority 911 call. The drone will be able to arrive on scene in minutes, often before officers can arrive, providing real-time situational awareness. The goal is simple: improve safety, reduce response times, and make better-informed decisions before officers arrive on scene.

HOW SPPD HAS BEEN USING DRONES



The department has already been using drones since 2023 – with officers first responding to a 911 call and then launching a drone at the scene to assess the situation.

HOW THE DDP IS DIFFERENT



There will be DDP docks positioned across the city. Inside those docks are drones which will be able to respond to high priority calls in a matter of minutes.

WHEN ARE DRONES USED?

Drones are used by the department for, but not limited to, the following situations:

- 🚨 Emergencies that pose the risks of injury, death, or overall public safety.
- 🚨 Search and rescue of vulnerable or missing adults and children.
- 🚨 Active crime scenes, and accident reconstruction and mapping
- 🚨 Water rescue, flood assessment, and natural disaster response coordination.



BENEFITS OF THE DOCKED DRONE PROGRAM

- 🚨 **Faster response and situational awareness.** A drone can respond to a call two miles away in less than 3 minutes. Driving that same distance can take 7 to 10 minutes.
- 🚨 **Enhanced safety.** By assessing dangerous situations from the air, drones reduce immediate risks to first responders.
- 🚨 **Improved decision-making.** Live video feeds from the air allows leaders to allocate resources more efficiently and develop better tactical plans.
- 🚨 **De-escalation and evidence collection.** Drones can help resolve incidents without physical force. They also collect, document, and store aerial footage for investigations.
- 🚨 **Cost-effectiveness.** Drones are much more cost-effective than traditional aerial technology and can help reduce operational costs.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How does this improve police response?

A: Speed and information. A drone can launch within seconds and reach most locations in its coverage area in minutes. That early aerial view allows officers to:

- Confirm whether a suspect is present or has left.
- Identify weapons or hazards.
- Locate victims or injured persons.
- Determine if additional resources are necessary.

In many cases, that early intelligence prevents unnecessary risk and helps ensure we send the right level of response.

Q: How does this impact officer and community safety?

A: It enhances safety for everyone. Better information reduces the likelihood of misjudgment and escalations. For example:

- In a weapons call, the drone can determine whether a suspect is armed before officers approach.
- In a burglary or alarm call, the drone can clear rooftops or backyards before entry.
- In a large crowd event, it provides real-time awareness without placing officers in elevated risk positions.

Q: What about privacy concerns?

A: Privacy protections are foundational to the program. Key safeguards include:

- Drones are deployed only for calls for service – not for general surveillance.
- All flights are logged, documented, and auditable.
- Video will be retained for seven days according to State Statute unless classified as evidence.
- The drones do not have facial recognition or other biometric-matching technology.



Q: What types of calls would drones respond to?

A: In many of these situations, drones allow us to de-escalate, allocate resources more efficiently, and sometimes resolve incidents without requiring extensive physical searches. Examples include:

- Weapons complaints.
- Robbery or burglary in progress.
- Missing persons.
- Vehicle pursuit termination location searches.
- Crash scenes.
- Large-scale emergencies or natural disasters.

Q: How will success be measured?

A: This program will be data-driven. We will track measurable outcomes, including:

- Time-to-arrival ahead of patrol units.
- Reduction in officer risk exposure.
- Clearance rates for certain crimes.
- Enhanced community safety through de-escalation due to drone assistance.
- Community feedback.