



Drone Exploring: Career Spotlights

Law Enforcement — Club

Overview: Police and sheriff's departments use drones to help find missing people, check on crowded events, and document crash or crime scenes accurately, all while respecting people's privacy. In this session, youth learn how law enforcement agencies use drones responsibly and practice a hands-on scene mapping activity that mirrors how officers document a scene from above.

OBJECTIVES

- Introduce youth to the career of using drones to support law enforcement work.
- Explain some responsible, real-world uses of drones by police and sheriff's departments.
- Practice documenting a mock scene accurately through a hands-on activity.
- Build awareness of why privacy and clear rules matter when using cameras to help keep communities safe.

SUPPLIES

- Flip chart or whiteboard and markers
- Cones, tape, or chalk to mark a mock scene area (like a small intersection or yard)
- Small objects to represent scene evidence markers (numbered cards or cones)
- A camera, tablet, or phone to take documentation photos
- Printed handouts: How Drones Support Law Enforcement and Scene Mapping Log

ADVISOR NOTES

- Emphasize that any real drone use by law enforcement must follow strict privacy rules and often requires specific authorization or a warrant, depending on the situation.
- Frame this session around helpful uses: finding missing people, documenting crash scenes accurately, and checking on crowd safety at large events.
- Avoid focusing on enforcement or surveillance in a way that feels adversarial. Keep the emphasis on safety and accuracy.
- Consider inviting a guest speaker (a local police or sheriff's department UAS officer/technician) to share how their agency uses drones responsibly. See Optional Extensions.
- If no guest speaker is available, Advisors can run the entire session using this outline and the resource links below.

SESSION OUTLINE

- **Welcome and Icebreaker (10 min)**
 - “Quick and Careful:” Ask youth how they think police used to document a crash scene before drones (measuring tape, sketches, photos from the ground).
- **Safety Moment (Privacy and Responsibility) (10 min)**
 - Drones used by law enforcement must follow clear rules about when and where they can be used.
 - Departments must respect people's privacy and often need specific authorization before using a drone in certain situations.
 - Ask: “Why do you think it's important for police departments to have clear rules about drone use, and to explain those rules to the public?”
- **Mini-Lesson: How Drones Support Law Enforcement (15 min)**
 - Explain real, responsible uses: helping search for a missing person, documenting a crash scene from above for accuracy, and monitoring crowd safety at large public events.
 - Discuss how accurate documentation helps everyone involved. It's not just about finding wrongdoing.

- **Activity: Scene Mapping Challenge** (20–25 min)
 - Mark off a small mock scene (like a mock crash or event layout) with a few numbered evidence markers placed around it.
 - Teams take photos from directly above and from several angles, then use those photos to sketch an accurate map of the scene on the Scene Mapping Log.
 - Compare how accurate each team's map turned out to be.
- **Discussion: Why Accuracy Matters** (10 min)
 - Discuss why an accurate, unbiased record of a scene helps everyone involved get a fair outcome.
- **Wrap-Up Share-Out** (10 min)
 - Groups share their scene maps and discuss what made mapping from directly above especially helpful.

REFLECTION SECTION

Advisor Note: Some sample questions are below. They are designed to help the participants apply what they have learned to their own interests. You are welcome to use these questions or develop your own.

Focusing Questions

- What was tricky about mapping the scene accurately?
- What surprised you about the responsible ways police departments use drones?

Analysis Questions

- Why does an accurate scene map matter for everyone involved, not just investigators?
- How could clear rules about drone use help build trust between a police department and its community?

Generalization Questions

- Where else in life does accurate, careful documentation matter?
- Why is it important to balance helpful technology with respecting people's privacy?

Challenge: This week, research whether your local police or sheriff's department has a drone program and what it's used for.

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Guest Speaker: Invite a local police or sheriff's department UAS officer or technician to share how their agency uses drones responsibly, in person or by video call.

Advisor-Led Option: If a guest speaker isn't available, Advisors can run this session using the outline above and the resource links below. No outside expert is required.

Resource Links: Search "police drone program explained" on a video platform for kid-friendly explainer videos.

Group Extension: Write a short set of drone use rules you'd want a police department to follow to balance safety and privacy.

Handout: How Drones Support Law Enforcement

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Read through the key ideas below before starting the Scene Mapping Challenge.

Search and Rescue Support

Police and sheriff's departments often use drones to help search for missing people faster and more safely.

Crash and Scene Documentation

An aerial photo of a crash scene helps investigators create an accurate, to-scale record of what happened.

Event and Crowd Safety

Drones can help monitor large public events for safety concerns like overcrowding or blocked exits.

Respecting Privacy

Responsible agencies follow clear rules and often need specific authorization before using a drone, especially in sensitive situations.

Handout: Scene Mapping Log

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Using your team's photos, sketch and label the mock scene below, including each numbered marker's location.

Marker #	What It Represents	Location Notes
1		
2		
3		
4		