



Drone Exploring: Career Spotlights

Law Enforcement — Post

Overview: This session takes a serious look at drones in law enforcement as a career: the roles involved (sworn officer UAS pilot, civilian UAS technician, crash or crime scene mapping specialist), the certifications and legal considerations (FAA Part 107, agency-specific training, warrant and privacy law basics), and realistic pay ranges. Explorers plan a mock crash-scene mapping mission and discuss the legal considerations behind when and how agencies may use drones.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the roles involved in law enforcement drone programs, both sworn and civilian.
- Learn the certifications and legal considerations relevant to this field: FAA Part 107, agency training, and basic privacy and warrant law.
- Identify realistic pay ranges for law enforcement drone program roles.
- Practice planning a mock crash-scene mapping mission using drone-based photogrammetry.

SUPPLIES

- Laptop and projector to show sample crash-scene mapping or drone-based scene documentation
- Printed handouts: Career Pathway — Law Enforcement Drone Program Specialist and Scene Mapping Mission Worksheet
- Whiteboard or flip chart and markers
- Optional: printed or digital copy of FAA's free Part 107 study guide (faa.gov/uas)

ADVISOR NOTES

- This session is career-focused: Use real role distinctions (sworn vs. civilian), real certification requirements, and real pay ranges rather than a hobbyist framing.
- Clarify that some law enforcement drone roles are filled by sworn officers with additional UAS training, while others are civilian technician positions supporting the department.
- Discuss, at a basic level, that certain uses of law enforcement drones require a warrant or specific legal authorization, depending on the situation and jurisdiction. This is a legal area that continues to evolve.
- Consider inviting a guest speaker who works in a law enforcement UAS program to share their career path. See Optional Extensions.
- If no guest speaker is available, Advisors can run the entire session using this outline, the Career Pathway handout, and the resource links below.

SESSION OUTLINE

- **Welcome and Icebreaker** (10 min)
 - Ask: "What responsible use of a police drone do you think would build the most trust with a community?"
- **Legal and Regulatory Moment: Certification and Privacy Law** (10–15 min)
 - Review the FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Certificate: minimum age 16, required knowledge test.
 - Discuss agency-specific UAS training required in addition to Part 107 for law enforcement drone programs.
 - Introduce, at a basic level, that certain drone uses require a warrant or specific legal authorization depending on the situation and jurisdiction.
- **Mini-Lesson: Careers in Law Enforcement Drone Programs** (15–20 min)
 - Roles: sworn officer UAS pilot, civilian UAS technician, crash or Temporary Flight Restriction crime scene mapping specialist.

- Typical pay: Law enforcement drone program roles have been posted in the \$77,000-\$112,000/year range; many programs staff this role as an additional duty within an officer's existing salary, while some departments use civilian technicians at lower entry pay.
- **Activity: Plan a Crash-Scene Mapping Mission (20–25 min)**
 - Using the Scene Mapping Mission Worksheet, small groups plan a mock crash-scene mapping mission: flight pattern, photo overlap for measurement accuracy, and documentation steps.
- **Wrap-Up Discussion (10 min)**
 - Groups present their mission plans.
 - Discuss the concrete steps (certification, agency application, training) needed to pursue this as a career.

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 surprised you about the legal considerations involved in law enforcement drone use?
- Which role (sworn officer pilot, civilian technician, scene mapping specialist) sounds most interesting to you?

Analysis Questions

- Why might some drone uses require a warrant while others don't?
- How does accurate scene mapping benefit both investigators and the people involved in an incident?

Generalization Questions

- How is balancing helpful technology with legal and ethical limits relevant in other careers?
- What other careers require this same combination of technical skill and legal responsibility?

Challenge: This week, research your local police or sheriff's department's drone policy (many agencies publish these publicly) and note one rule that stood out to you.

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Guest Speaker: Invite someone who works in a law enforcement UAS program to share their career path and take questions, in person or by video call.

Advisor-Led Option: If no guest speaker is available, Advisors can run the full session using this outline, the Career Pathway handout, and the resource links below. No outside expert is required.

Resource Links: FAA Part 107 overview ([faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators](https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators)); publicly posted drone use policies from local police or sheriff's departments; professional associations for public safety UAS programs.

Extension Project: Explorers who are 16 or older can begin studying for the actual Part 107 knowledge test using the FAA's free study guide.

Handout: Career Pathway — Law Enforcement Drone Program Specialist

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A typical path into this field looks like this:

1. Interest and Hobby Flying

Learn basic drone operation and become comfortable with photo and video documentation.

2. FAA Part 107 Certification (Age 16+)

Pass the FAA knowledge test to legally fly for pay or for an agency program.

3. Agency-Specific Training

Additional department training on policy, privacy law, and operational procedures is required.

4. Sworn or Civilian Role

Some programs use sworn officers with UAS training; others hire civilian technicians to support the department.

5. Program Pay

Law enforcement drone program roles have been posted in the \$77,000-\$112,000/year range, though many programs are structured as additional duty within an officer's existing salary.

Handout: Scene Mapping Mission Worksheet

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Use this worksheet to plan your mock crash-scene mapping mission.

Planning Item	Your Plan	Notes and Risks
Flight pattern over scene		
Photo overlap for measurement accuracy		
Documentation and reporting steps		
Legal authorization needed		
Privacy considerations		