

Handbook of Operating Procedures

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES

A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide administrative roles, responsibilities, and procedures for the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) on The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) property and off-campus when UAVs are to be operated as part of UTRGV-sponsored activities.

B. Persons Affected

This policy applies to all employees, students, visitors, UTRGV affiliates, and any other individual or entity, including without limitation filmmakers who wish to use UAVs on UTRGV property or while conducting UTRGV-sponsored activities off-campus.

C. Policy

1. It is the policy of UTRGV to provide a safe educational, living, and working environment for its students, employees, affiliates, and visitors. UTRGV recognizes the use of UAVs on UTRGV property may threaten the privacy and safety of the UTRGV community, disturb the educational goals of UTRGV, and interfere with the UTRGV's community's reasonable use and enjoyment of the air above UTRGV property.
2. UTRGV prohibits the use of UAVs on UTRGV property and off-campus when conducting UTRGV-sponsored events, except as required by law or as authorized by UTRGV under this policy.
3. Purposes for which UAV operations may be considered under this approval process include:
 - a. Academic or research related purposes
 - b. Public safety purposes
 - c. Marketing projects sanctioned by University Marketing and Communications
4. Any approved use of UAVs on UTRGV property or off-campus in connection with a UTRGV-sponsored event must comply with applicable Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations for such use.
5. This policy is not intended to provide approval for filming, video, or photography on UTRGV property, or procurement of UAV services. Approval for these activities, associated with the use of UAVs, must be obtained prior to any request for use of UAVs on UTRGV property.
6. A UTRGV employee who violates this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. A student who violates this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion. A visitor or other third party who uses a UAV on UTRGV property in violation of this policy will be considered to be trespassing and will be subject to actions available to UTRGV, including removal from campus, arrest, prosecution, or other legal action.

D. Procedures

1. *Use of UAVs*

- a. General - A person operating a UAV under this policy must meet all applicable legal requirements to operate the UAV, including but not limited to Special Authority for Certain Unmanned Systems ([49 U.S.C. §44807](#) and any related regulations); a Certificate of Authorization documenting the operating of a specific UAV, for a specific purpose, in a specific area; a UAV registered with the FAA's Unmanned Systems Registration system; and a pilot with an FAA Airman Certificate or Remote Pilot Certification. Notice must be provided to the local air traffic control or FAA Flight Standards District Office when legally required.
- b. On University Property - The use of UAVs on UTRGV property is prohibited unless otherwise required by law or approved in advance by UTRGV.
- c. UTRGV-Sponsored Use Off-Campus - Use of UAVs off-campus by UTRGV employees in the scope of their employment must have prior approval by the applicable department head and dean/vice president or their delegate. The requestor must submit the required form to begin the process. The review will include input from Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management (EHSRM), the Office of Legal Affairs, and other offices as deemed necessary. Written approval by the land owner or lessor, as applicable, must be provided by the requestor.

2. *Authorization Procedures for On-Campus Use*

- a. Approval Process - EHSRM is responsible for approving the use of UAVs on UTRGV property.
- b. Application - An individual who wishes to use UAVs on UTRGV property must submit an Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) Request Form to EHSRM.
- c. UAV Review Group - The UAV Review Group will review all requests for UAV use and provide recommendations to EHSRM. Given the variety of campus interests, the UAV Review Group will be comprised of representatives from the list below, though additional groups may be involved based on the specific request:
 - i. EHSRM, whose representative will serve as chair
 - ii. Office of Legal Affairs
 - iii. President's Office
 - iv. UTRGV Police Department
 - v. University Marketing and Communications (UMC)
- d. Criteria used for approval of these requests will include assessment of:
 - i. Risk to the health and safety of persons on UTRGV property;
 - ii. Risk to UTRGV property;
 - iii. Distraction from the educational mission of UTRGV;

- iv. Business, educational, or research value to UTRGV;
 - v. Compliance with UTRGV insurance requirements; and
 - vi. Compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
- e. The UAV Review Group may also seek input from departments affected by the use of the UAV. The UAV Review Group may propose an alternate time, location, or any other change in the best interest of UTRGV.
- f. Final Approval - EHSRM will review the UAV Review Group's recommendation and ultimately approve the request as submitted, provide conditional approval, or deny the request and provide notification to the applicant. If an approval or conditional approval is granted, the applicant must acknowledge in writing the approval as granted before proceeding with the use of UAVs. The written acknowledgement must include a statement that the applicant will comply with all FAA regulations and other applicable laws and policy. Decisions made by EHSRM under this section are final. In addition, UTRGV reserves the right to cancel or reschedule any approved UAV usage, if doing so is in the best interest of UTRGV.
- g. Notice - Upon approval of the use of UAVs, the applicant is required to collaborate with UTRGV to provide notice to any parties who may be affected by the use of UAVs. This notice must include the time, place, and purpose of the use of UAVs.
- h. Damage - The applicant granted approval for use is responsible for any damage resulting from the use of UAVs on UTRGV property. If the applicant is a UTRGV employee or department using a third-party contractor to operate the UAV, liability for damage must be otherwise assigned contractually to this third party. Damage to UTRGV property or injury to an individual due to UAV operations is considered a violation of this policy.

3. *Insurance Requirements*

The insurance requirements associated with use of UAVs on UTRGV property and off-campus will be determined by EHSRM, in consultation with University of Texas System Office of Risk Management. Depending on the specific request, departments may be required to purchase both liability and physical damage insurance at the cost to the department.

4. *Registration Requirements*

All UTRGV-owned or UTRGV-acquired UAVs must be properly registered in accordance with FAA requirements.

5. *Exceptions*

Prior notice and authorization is preferred, but not required, for use of UAVs on UTRGV property by emergency personnel acting under authority of applicable law.

E. Definitions

1. UTRGV property – For purposes of this policy, means all real property owned by UTRGV, including the air above the property necessary for the reasonable use and enjoyment of the land.

2. Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) – An aircraft operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft. This includes, but is not limited to, quad-copters, remote-controlled planes, and devices commonly referred to as “drones.”

F. Related Statutes or Regulations, Rules, Policies, or Standards

[14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 107](#), Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems

[UTRGV Unmanned Aerial Vehicle \(UAV\) Request Form](#)

G. Dates Reviewed or Amended

Not applicable.