



DRONE Public Safety Campaign

FAQ

The County of Santa Clara approved an ordinance intended to reasonably regulate the use of an unmanned aircraft, including aircraft commonly known as drones, to prevent any damage or injury caused by their interference with emergency response efforts and their disruption of custody operations and potential use in illicit activities at County correctional facilities and juvenile facilities.

On June 19, 2018, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors unanimously approved final adoption of Ordinance No. NS-643 amending Section A20-52.1, adding Section A27-18.1, and adding Chapter X to Division B13 of the Santa Clara County Ordinance Code relating to Unmanned Aircraft Operations.

What is an "Unmanned Aircraft"?

"Unmanned Aircraft" means an aircraft that can fly autonomously or be piloted remotely and is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft. Unmanned aircrafts include aircraft commonly known as drones.

What is an "Unmanned Aircraft System"?

An "Unmanned Aircraft System" means an unmanned aircraft and associated equipment, including any communication and data links, navigation equipment, and other components that control the unmanned aircraft.

Why was the ordinance passed by the County of Santa Clara?

This ordinance is intended to reasonably regulate the use of an unmanned aircraft, including aircraft commonly known as drones, to prevent their interference with emergency response operations, such as efforts to respond to wildfires and other natural disasters. Additionally, the ordinance is intended to prevent unmanned aircraft from disrupting custody operations and being used in illicit activities at County correctional facilities and juvenile facilities.

As unmanned aircraft systems have become more common, the County has encountered increasing incidents of unmanned aircraft creating risk of damage and injury. For example, unmanned aircraft have delayed wildfire suppression operations in the Santa Cruz Mountains and have been used in attempts to deliver contraband within County correctional facilities.

What are the potential penalties for landing an unmanned aircraft within the fence or perimeter of a County correction or juvenile facility?

You could be prosecuted for a misdemeanor and be subject to civil and administrative fines and penalties.

What are the potential penalties for operating an unmanned aircraft to deliver items within the fence or perimeter of a County correction or juvenile facility?

You could be subject to civil and administrative fines and penalties.

What constitutes an emergency under the ordinance?

"Emergency" means a condition or situation that has caused injury to persons or damage to property, or endangers persons or property, and results from a fire; explosion, aircraft, rail, or vehicle accident; flooding; storms; earthquake; toxic chemical or biological spill or accidental release; act of terrorism; utility failure; or similar natural or human-caused event.

What are the potential penalties for operating an unmanned aircraft in a manner that interferes with emergency responses?

It is unlawful for a person to operate an unmanned aircraft system in a manner that interferes with firefighting, emergency services, law enforcement, or a military operation in response to an emergency. Any person in violation of this may be subject to civil and administrative fines and penalties.

