



CITY OF PULLMAN WASHINGTON

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAA Issues Drone Certification to Pullman Police

PULLMAN – The Federal Aviation Administration has issued a Public Agency small (under 55 pounds) Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) Certificate of Authorization (COA) to the Pullman Police Department to operate drones.

The Pullman Police Department (PPD) purchased four sUAS units (drones) in July 2017: DJI Inspire I, Phantom 4 Pro, and two Sparks. The drones are to be used for search & rescue, traffic coordination (such as post-game traffic for WSU home football games), outdoor crime scene and major traffic collision documentation, tactical reconnaissance, tactical deployment (SWAT), weather event reconnaissance (flooding), and to assist the Pullman Fire Department with firefighting coordination and tactics. Prior to purchase, PPD held two public meetings soliciting public input on drone use policy, particularly to address privacy concerns.

Three Pullman Police Officers, Matt Burkett, Ryan McNannay, and Alex Gordon, obtained FAA Remote Pilot Certificates. These certificates are also called “Part 107 Licenses”, named after the applicable section in the Code of Federal Regulations. The Part 107 licenses have allowed the officers to lawfully operate the PPD drones prior to the issuance of the COA.

With the issuance of a COA in May 2018, the PPD can now operate their drones at night, and can train and certify their own pilots. The COA authorizes drone operation in seven counties and two states. In Washington, the COA includes the counties of Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman. In Idaho, Latah and Nez Perce counties are included. Letters of support from the Sheriff in each of the counties accompanied the COA application, which was submitted in September 2017.

Since their purchase, PPD has deployed drones to search for a suspect who fled from officers on a traffic stop, document major crime scenes, support Quad Cities Drug Task Force operations, evaluate traffic patterns during major athletic events, and for review of tactics by filming crowd control and SWAT training. The drones were also demonstrated for the public at Pullman’s 1st Annual Aerial Adventure Day and at the Lentil Festival, both in August 2017. They will again be demonstrated at Pullman’s 2nd Annual Aerial Adventure Day on August 11 at Kruegel Park, and at the National Lentil Festival, August 17-18.

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