

CASE STUDY

CHULA VISTA POLICE DEPARTMENT

The nation's model UAS program for law enforcement



CHULA VISTA PD UAS PROGRAM

Problem:

The Chula Vista Police Department wanted to use drones to support police operations in a safe, responsible, and transparent manner.

Solution:

The City of Chula Vista chose **AirGuard** to provide 3rd party tracking for all of Chula Vista Police Department's (CVPD) Drone Flights. CVPD uses the flight tracking and data supplied by **AirGuard** and makes their flights public on their website after 24 hours. Making flights public allows CVPD to be transparent about their operations and avoid the public outcry that led to several other cities shutting down their drone operations.

CHULA VISTA USING REMOTE ID TO PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY

On May 9, 2018, the FAA announced ten companies selected to be part of the UAS Integration Pilot Program (IPP) that outlines ten experiments and tests on how drones will be integrated in the US. The FAA selected the City of San Diego and Chula Vista to be one of the ten awards to establish the best practices and procedures for law enforcement to integrate drones into official operations safely. The goal was to establish best practices, policies, and procedures for law enforcement to fly drones beyond line of sight in response to 911 calls.

The City of Chula Vista quickly reached out through various social media networks to make sure they kept the public aware and engaged after witnessing how several departments were closed down due to public disapproval. What's more, they decided to take it an extra step in showcasing transparency.

Chula Vista Police Department (CVPD) asked 911 Security to be part of their program and provide 3rd party tracking for all drone flights. All CVPD drone flight information will be tracked and made available to the public. After a 24-hour delay, all flight data is uploaded and posted on the city's public website.

The website will allow the public to access the following information about CVPD drone flights:

- ▶ **Flight Date**
- ▶ **Flight Path**
- ▶ **Flight Duration**
- ▶ **Locations Visited**
- ▶ **Flight Purpose**

CVPD is taking transparency and community policing seriously as they inform the public and continue to integrate drones as a first responder (DFR). Using Remote ID to track drones is an application that is not unique to law enforcement.

CHULA VISTA USING REMOTE ID TO PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY

Several large enterprises currently using drones want to expand their use to more applications and outside vendors once they can track accountability using Remote ID. Rod Elrifai, project manager for General Electric wind turbines, explains precisely this. He says, **"this has passed the proof of concept stage years ago; we are looking to scale. But with scale comes many safety and security concerns that we can risk unless we show accountability."**

Beyond being a model for transparency, the Chula Vista Police Department continues to be the nation's model UAS program for law enforcement in other ways.

Chula Vista paves the way for BVLOS UAS operations

Public safety departments such as law enforcement are one group that would greatly benefit from being able to fly BVLOS operations. Chula Vista Police Department is paving the way for groundbreaking BVLOS operations. In July 2020, Chula Vista PD was the first police department in the nation to receive beyond the line of sight FAA approval. This approval came after months-long collaboration with the Chula Vista Police Department and the San Diego UAS Integration Pilot Program.

Chula Vista's FAA approval grants them access to fly Skydio drones BVLOS during emergencies provided they don't fly more than 50 feet higher than the nearest obstacle, stay within 1,500 feet of the pilot, and return to visual line of sight "as soon as practical."

In August 2020, the FAA released the BVLOS waiver guide for first responders during its annual Unmanned Aircraft Systems Symposium. This new waiver will enable public safety departments to protect communities and officers in the line of duty. BVLOS drone operations bring a whole new level of situational awareness in situations that might be too dangerous for officers. This new waiver will open up a more comprehensive range of UAS use cases for law enforcement and public safety departments. The nature of emergency operations makes it difficult to remain compliant with FAA regulations leading officials to abort UAS missions.

NATION'S MODEL FOR DRONES AS FIRST RESPONDER:

CHULA VISTA POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Chula Vista Police Department has become the nation's model for police departments using drones. The Chula Vista PD's Drone as First Responder (DFR) Program is a revolutionary drone use case intended to increase officer safety, enhance efficiency, and improve response times. The system involves deploying at-the-ready drones from the top of buildings within the city to calls for service and critical incidents. The drones are operated remotely via the internet by a unique position called the teleoperator.

The teleoperator is not just a drone pilot but also a police officer who can manage incidents and direct appropriate response. The DFR program provides first responders with decision-quality data and incident management before anyone on the ground is in harm's way.

According to a report by The New York Times, each day, the Chula Vista police respond to as many as 15 emergency calls with a drone and have launched more than 4,100 drone flights since the program's inception two years ago. Chula Vista PD can oversee roughly one-third of the city from two drone launch sites.

The latest drone technology that allows for automated self-flying drones has the power to transform everyday policing, just as it can change package delivery, building inspections, and military reconnaissance. As drones become more sophisticated with automation, police departments will be able to do more with drones for everyday routine monitoring and responding to 911 calls.