



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
POLICIES & PROCEDURES**



POLICY NUMBER	
OPR: 49	
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SUBJECT: STATE POLICE AIRCRAFT SECTION

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards and procedures for the application and selection process for membership into the New Mexico State Police Aircraft Section, and guidelines for its deployment and utilization.

2.0 POLICY

It is the policy of the New Mexico Department of Public Safety (DPS) to maintain a highly flexible and mobile section for the performance of specialized aircraft-related assignments.

3.0 APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all New Mexico State Police commissioned personnel of the New Mexico Department of Public Safety.

4.0 REFERENCES

- A. Federal Aviation Rules (FAR) Part 61 and 91**
- B. NMSP Aircraft Section Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**

5.0 DEFINITIONS

- A. Aircraft Section Commander** – The manager of the Aviation Section responsible for all aviation operations.
- B. DPS** – Department of Public Safety.
- C. FAA** – Federal Aviation Administration.
- D. TACTICAL FLIGHT OFFICER (TFO)** – Tactical Flight Officers are commissioned New Mexico State Police officers who are assigned to the aircraft section and are trained to provide law enforcement oriented aviation support throughout the State of New Mexico.

6.0 PROCEDURE

A. Activation - Procedure for Assisting Aircraft in Emergency Landings

When assisting department aircraft in an emergency landing during dark or low-light conditions, the following procedures should be used when practical:

1. When only one (1) patrol vehicle is available, the vehicle shall be parked at the approach end of the runway or landing area, just to the right of center with the headlights and spotlight shining down the runway, pointing away from the approaching aircraft, and with emergency lights activated;
2. When two (2) patrol vehicles are available, they should be parked side-by-side on the approach end of the runway, one (1) at the extreme left edge of the runway and the other at the extreme right edge;

3. Once parked, the officers will exit the units and stage in a safe location. If possible, the officers should attempt to communicate their position to the pilot;
4. Time permitting, ground officers should place several fuses at the far end of the runway, to enable pilots to observe runway length;
5. If there is a strong wind, it is suggested that the ground officer identify the runway on which the aircraft can land **INTO** the wind; and/or
6. Ground officers **SHALL**, in every case, make every attempt to locate and identify any and all obstructions that could potentially affect the aircraft's safe landing (i.e. power lines, antennas, trees, etc.).

B. Activation - Procedures for Requesting Department Helicopter

1. Requests for helicopter emergency medical evacuation due to life threatening automobile crashes or accidental injury should be directed to commercial medical helicopter services with on-board medical technicians and life support equipment.
2. All non-SAR requests for the department helicopter will be submitted through the Special Operations Commander. All SAR requests will be submitted through the Search and Rescue Resource Officer or designee. The Special Operations Commander has the final approval of any requests for the department helicopter.
3. If the department helicopter is unable to respond to the request and the situation warrants a call for assistance from other airborne resources, the State Police Chief, or designee, will make the appropriate request.
4. The following information must be provided for all requests:
 - a. The exact nature of the request for service;
 - b. Exact location;
 - c. Type of mission and description of person(s) or vehicle(s) involved;
 - d. Number of people involved and how many will require evacuation;
 - e. Severity of injuries, if known, and applicable; and
 - f. What units to contact at the scene, their unit numbers, and correct radio frequency.
5. Suggestions for officers at the scene:
 - a. Establish communication as soon as possible with the requested aircraft and continue to provide updates to the aircrew;
 - b. Communicate the wind direction, if known;
 - c. Keep personnel away from the helicopter. Extreme caution should be exercised when working around helicopters; especially near the tail rotor; and/or
 - d. Ground officers shall only approach a helicopter from the right or left side of the helicopter, and **ONLY** when the pilot or TFO has signaled that it is safe to do so.

C. Response - Programs/Missions

The principal uses for the departmental aircraft include but are not limited to:

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1. Searches – criminal suspects, lost persons, etc.;
2. Rescue – lost, sick, or injured persons, etc.;
3. Reconnaissance – disaster areas, riots, law enforcement operations, critical incidents, etc.;
4. Surveillance – narcotic investigations, criminal investigations, impact operations, etc.;
5. Airborne patrol operations and highway patrol;
6. Miscellaneous law enforcement operations;
7. Transportation;
8. Equipment and materials transportation; and/or
9. Assist, as needed, all federal, state, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies and other agencies as deemed appropriate.

D. Operations

1. Regulations
 - a. The State Police aircraft will be used for **OFFICIAL BUSINESS ONLY**.
 - i. All requests to use the department aircraft will be approved by the Special Operations Commander or his/her designee.
 - ii. The Aircraft Section Commander will, in exigent circumstances, be authorized to approve any of the previously listed missions after ensuring risks identified on the Risk Assessment Matrix have been mitigated to an acceptable level prior to flight.
 - b. The aircraft will be operated in compliance with applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations, and department policy.
 - c. The Aircraft Section Commander will designate an acting commander when on leave or out of the headquarters area for more than twenty-four (24) hours.
 - d. Only qualified pilots who are certified by the Aircraft Section Commander, and approved by the State Police Chief, and meet all fixed/rotary wing FAA and insurance requirements, shall be authorized to operate DPS aircraft.
 - e. The pilot will be in command of the aircraft to include all persons in the aircraft, regardless of rank and authority, during flight. The pilot will have the sole responsibility for determining whether a flight is safe, and for canceling or terminating flights determined to be hazardous.
 - f. DPS pilots will complete all reports required by state and federal laws and regulations and department policy in a timely manner.
 - g. DPS pilots will immediately, or as soon as practical, report any accident or unusual incident involving department aircraft to the Aircraft Section Commander or Acting Commander who will report the incident to the Special Operations Commander. A written report detailing the incident will be submitted to the Commander or Acting Commander within forty-eight (48) hours from the time of the incident.

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- h. DPS pilots will be responsible for complying with all required inspections, including daily checks as required by the FAA, aircraft manufacturer, engine manufacturer, etc. DPS pilots will be responsible for staying current and maintaining proficiency in accordance with applicable Federal Aviation Rules (FAR's) and the NMSP Aircraft Section Standard Operating Procedures. Failure to do so will range from a corrective action plan being initiated to removal from flight status.
 - i. The Aircraft Section Commander and maintenance technicians will be responsible for having and keeping the aircraft in good condition.
 - i. They will be responsible for making sure that all required aircraft inspections and maintenance such as oil changes, minor repairs, and cleaning are performed.
 - ii. They will be responsible for the proper documentation of services, inspections, maintenance, and repairs.
 - iii. The Aircraft Section Commander and maintenance technicians will ensure that strict compliance with all pertinent FAA rules and regulations and guidelines established by applicable aircraft and engine manufacturers are adhered to.
 - iv. The Aircraft Section Commander and maintenance technicians will confer with the Special Operations commander for all major repairs and maintenance.
 - j. No person may act as Pilot-in-Command of the DPS aircraft at night, under Night Vision Goggles (NVG) and/or under instrument flight rules (IFR) without meeting the requirements of F.A.R. 6157 and the NMSP Aircraft Section SOP.
 - k. Flight operations will generally be conducted at an altitude of not less than one thousand (1000) feet above terrain and in **NO** case, other than in extenuating circumstances or in an emergency, shall an aircraft be operated below 500 AGL; excluding helicopter operations.
 - i. In all cases, operations are to be governed by appropriate FAA regulations and waivers of regulations, including the specific restrictions contained therein.
 - ii. A helicopter may be operated below 500 AGL and clear of clouds if operated at a speed that allows the pilot adequate opportunity to see any air traffic or obstruction in time to avoid a collision.
2. Flight Duty Limitations
- A normal flight duty day will be ten (10) hours.
- a. A pilot shall **NOT** act as Pilot-in-Command of a DPS aircraft for more than eight (8) hours in any twenty-four (24) hour period; ten (10) hours for a two (2) pilot crew.
 - b. Flight time during any seven (7) day period should not exceed twenty-five (25) hours.
3. Flight duty time will be limited to fourteen (14) hours in a twenty-four (24) hour period.

4. Deviations from these limitations will only be permitted in extreme emergency situations or extraordinary circumstances.
 - a. A written report will be required if deemed necessary by the Special Operations Commander.
 - b. All deviations will require prior approval from the Special Operations Commander as conditions, circumstances and time permit.

E. Selection, Qualification, Membership, Training, and Dismissal

1. Selection - Pilot / Tactical Flight Officer (TFO) Selection
 - a. All applicants must have a minimum of two (2) years patrol experience and have successfully completed the department FTO program. Patrol experience may include time spent in patrol with other agencies prior to becoming a commissioned State Police officer.
 - b. Must provide officer evaluation forms for the last two years of service, if applicable.
 - c. Commissioned members of the DPS who wish to be considered for assignment as a department pilot or tactical flight officer (TFO) shall submit a resume through the appropriate chain of command to the Office of the Chief. The resume shall include, but not be limited to, the following information:
 - i. Name, rank, current area of assignment and date of assignment at that location;
 - ii. If applicable, the make and model of all aircraft in which flight time was logged, listing the amount of flight time in each;
 - iii. If applicable, the total aircraft flight time;
 - iv. Aircraft flight time in the past twelve (12) months;
 - v. If applicable, the type of FAA pilot rating and any additional ratings;
 - vi. If applicable, any FAA violations or accidents; and
 - vii. Any other information that would assist in evaluating pilot qualifications.
 - b. Commanders/Directors will forward the resume to the Office of the Chief with a copy to the Special Operations Commander and the Aircraft Section Commander.
 - c. All prospective pilots shall possess a valid FAA Commercial Pilot Certificate with an Instrument Rating and a current FAA First Class Medical Certificate. Flying time requirements vary with insurance requirements and aircraft type.
 - d. Applicant processing may be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the Chief.
 - e. Resumes, qualifications, and personnel files of prospective pilots and Tactical Flight Officers requesting consideration will be reviewed and a selection will be made by the Special Operations Commander in consultation with the Aircraft Section Commander and with the concurrence of the Office of the Chief.

2. Qualification

- a. Each pilot certified by DPS will be allocated no less than three (3) flight hours each month, per assigned aircraft, for flight proficiency/training.
 - i. Proficiency/training flights will be conducted in dual capacity, (i.e. Pilot and TFO) in order to maximize training hours whenever possible.
 - ii. The pilots should direct this proficiency/training to the practice of intermediate and advanced contact and/or instrument maneuvers.
 - iii. A summary of maneuvers practiced shall be recorded on the Departmental Flight Report Sheet and in the pilot's flight log book.

3. Membership

a. DPS Aircraft Insignia (Wings)

Qualifications for Awards to Pilots/Tactical Flight Officers (TFO)

- i. Recipient must be a fully commissioned, actively employed, DPS employee who has been assigned to the Aircraft Section and has completed upgrade training for an assigned flown aircraft.
- ii. TFO recipient must be a fully commissioned, actively employed, DPS employee who has been assigned to the Aircraft Section for at least one (1) year of continuous service and has completed Readiness Level One (RL-1) training.
- iii. Pilots or TFOs will **NOT** be permitted to wear the Aircraft Insignia as part of their Class "A" uniform once they have left the Section, unless they have completed five (5) years of continuous service with the Aircraft Section.

b. Display and Wearing of Insignia

- i. The insignia will be displayed on the right side of the staff uniform, field uniform, or fatigue shirt, 3/8 of an inch above, and centered on the name plate or small arms qualification insignia.
- ii. The insignia will be displayed on the right side of the staff coat or coveralls, horizontally centered with the badge, which is displayed on the left side and vertically centered in a like manner.

c. Flight Physicals

DPS pilots are required to possess at least a valid FAA Second Class medical certificate issued within the last twelve (12) calendar months by a department approved physician. TFOs may initially obtain a FAA Class Three Medical Certificate.

- i. The Department will pay for the flight physical and other associated medical expenses.
- ii. Pilots should instruct the physician to submit the bill to the Attention of the Special Operations Commander, New Mexico State Police.
- iii. A copy of the Medical Certificate will be placed in the pilot's Aircraft Section Training/Evaluation Folder.

d. Flight Limitations due To Illness, Injury, or Other Physical/Mental Impairment

Illness Preventing Flight Duty

- i. A pilot shall **NOT** fly a department aircraft when he/she is incapacitated in anyway due to illness, injury, or is in any way deemed impaired by the Aircraft Section Commander with concurrence of the Special Operations Commander.
- ii. A pilot who is under a doctor's care or who thinks that a minor illness would affect his/her flying ability, shall request non-flying duty from the Aircraft Section Commander or the Special Operations Commander.
- iii. If medication is required, it must be approved and the pilot certified fit for flight by an FAA designated medical examiner or flight surgeon.

4. Training

All personnel will attend in-service training, as well as specialized training outside the department as allowed by budgetary constraints. Additionally, DPS pilots qualified as FAA Certified Flight Instructors (CFI) will complete an FAA approved CFI refresher course **PRIOR** to the expiration of their CFI certificate. The expenses will be paid by the Department.

5. Dismissal

- a. Membership and participation as a part of the team is considered a privilege not a promotion. To maintain team integrity and the highest level of standards, all members are subject to disciplinary action and may be removed from the team, without cause, by the Chief of the State Police. Reasons for removal or suspension from the team may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Failure to attend special assignments;
 - ii. Failure to attend training unless excused;
 - iii. Failure to pass a certification or re-certification course;
 - iv. Failure to maintain team standards; and/or
 - v. Failure to meet district duties and responsibilities.
- b. Flight after Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages
 - i. No person who has consumed any alcoholic beverage within eight (8) hours preceding a flight, or who may have a B.A.C. of greater than 0.0, will act as a pilot or crew member in the department aircraft.
 - ii. Any violation of this policy will be grounds for immediate removal from flight duty and the employee will be subject to disciplinary action as deemed appropriate by the Office of the Chief.
 - iii. Refer to department policy, *PRS: 21 Drug and Alcohol Testing*, for further details concerning drug and alcohol use.

F. Uniforms

Refer to department policy *ADM: 24 State Police Uniforms*, for the uniform designated for team members.

G. Equipment

It is the goal of the team to keep equipment in a constant state of readiness and to be accountable for all issued equipment.

H. Organization

1. The Special Operations Commander will oversee all DPS aviation operations. Aircraft and aircrews will be stationed in Santa Fe or at strategic locations throughout the state as designated by the State Police Chief. They will be utilized as needed.
2. All aircrew members assigned to the Aircraft Section will work under the direct supervision of the Aircraft Section Commander. The Aircraft Section Commander and all other DPS assigned or attached aircrews shall serve in the Aircraft Section at the pleasure of the Chief.
3. Aircraft maintenance technicians will be under the direct supervision of the Special Operations Commander.
4. The Aircraft Section Commander will report to the Special Operations Commander and be responsible for all daily flight operations, maintenance coordination, purchasing, standardization, evaluations, training, safety, planning, and personnel matters involving aircraft and assigned or attached Aircraft Section personnel.
5. The Aircraft Section Commander will be responsible for making sure that DPS aircraft are readily available for any use as designated by the Chief.

I. Pilot's Records

1. The Special Operation's Commander and Aircraft Section Commander, or his/her designee, shall maintain an Aircrew Training and Evaluation Folder on each crew member. Files will contain, at a minimum, the following documents:
 - a. Copy of pilot certificates;
 - b. Copies of additional ratings, e.g., flight instructor, etc.;
 - c. Copy of latest medical certificate;
 - d. Copy of Aircrew experience form which is submitted annually to the insurance company;
 - e. Copy of certificate of completion of any school which establishes crew member proficiency or flight status;
 - f. Copies of any additional pilot proficiency or qualification checks conducted by the FAA which attest to the pilot's currency or proficiency; and
 - g. Copies of upgrade / training documents completed under training provided by an NMSP flight instructor.
2. Each crew member shall maintain a current personal pilot log book. The log book shall be available for inspection upon request by the Special Operations Commander, the Aircraft Section Commander, his designee, or the Office of the Chief.

J. Aircraft Regulations and Operations Manual Note

Only the Chief of the New Mexico State Police will have the authority to waive anything contained in this policy. The pilot in command of any DPS aircraft may deviate from this policy to ensure safety of flight.

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7.0 ATTACHMENTS

NONE

8.0 APPROVAL

APPROVED BY: S/ Scott Weaver **DATE:** October 22, 2018
DPS Cabinet Secretary