



National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security Offers UAS-Related Resources

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“Reporting in from the south parking lot. There’s a young kid out here with a drone, buzzing and annoying spectators coming in for the game.”

“Well, tell him to cut it out.”

“That’s why I’m calling in...am I allowed to do that? What kind of rules apply to drones?”

A similar conversation could take place somewhere in the United States at a high school sporting event, a small college, or even a larger university. Unmanned aircraft systems/unmanned aerial vehicles (UAS/UAV), better known to the public as drones, can be purchased for relatively little money and launched into the sky with no training. Sometimes their pilots are children or hobbyists; sometimes they are individuals with other goals in mind.

Information about what these individuals can and cannot do — as well as information about how law enforcement agencies, schools and venue management can make use of UAS capabilities — can be hard to come by. With all of that in mind, the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) at the University of Southern Mississippi held a two-day UAV Innovation and Technology Forum on May 15-16, 2018, and subsequently released a summary report from the event and created a website of related resources.



“The main message we want to put out is that drone technologies are constantly evolving, and we need to be aware of their threat potential as well as ways we can leverage the technology ourselves,” says Daniel Ward, NCS4 assistant director of curriculum. “We encourage individuals involved in spectator sports security to reach out to us for information. We collect information and polices from the professional level all the way down to K-12 schools, and if we can’t provide the direct support someone needs, we can point them in the direction of someone who can.”

Holding the summit was one of many ways that NCS4 collects that information. From a number of applications, NCS4 selected approximately 60 attendees from the Federal Aviation Administration, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, sports and entertainment venues, colleges and high schools, and law enforcement and other public safety agencies. Participants spent a portion of both days discussing key issues and concerns, becoming more familiar with key federal

initiatives and developing a path forward. They also took part in a variety of hands-on technology demonstrations.

“We wanted to make sure we had multiple perspectives,” Ward says. “Someone working in facilities management has different concerns than a law enforcement professional. Someone working in operations has a different mindset than someone working in emergency management. One might see it as a marketing tool, and another might see it as a benefit for situational awareness among public safety agencies. And there is always awareness of the threat that UAS can pose.”

Given that smaller universities, colleges and school districts have limited financial resources, Ward says it’s important to remember that while not everyone can purchase UAS technology for their own use or spend a lot of money on a monitoring system, everyone can exercise several other low-cost/no-cost options that apply. For example, they can create a policy, become more familiar with existing technologies and their capabilities, and improve communication and develop partnerships with the local public safety community. They also need to be aware of state and local policies and regulations that may restrict or prohibit the use of UAS at sports venues and over private property such as some universities, because these vary widely.



Other best practices noted during the summit include establishing proactive marketing activities, incorporating UAS policies into student codes of conduct and emphasizing a “see something-say something” approach to UAS.

“We encourage schools and venues to make sure they have a policy in place and to do whatever they can to make the public aware of it, through means such as school websites and signage. In addition to making sure you communicate your expectations, you need to maintain vigilance. A lot of drone operators are not aware of restrictions or consequences, so we need to make sure we are educating people as best we can,” Ward says.

If financial resources exist to use the technology for helping with crowd control or just providing a new angle on game footage, schools and venues at every level need to reach out to the local FAA representative for help in developing a usage policy. Ward notes that the FAA wants to provide support, although that support does not extend to enforcing local policies and

ordinances.

Potential UAS users also need to be aware that the FAA continues to revise its existing policies and develop new ones as the technology continues to evolve. Ward says that's because when it comes to UAS, technology is outpacing policy development: "We're constantly operating in catch-up mode. We need to try to protect spectators and staff, and at the same time, do it within legal and appropriate boundaries. As a center, our role is to build awareness and educate people so they can enhance awareness and security."

For more information on the summit, click [here](#). To contact NCS4, phone (601) 266-6183.

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