



# New Prague Police Department

City of New Prague In the Counties of Scott & Le Sueur

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**Tim Applen, Chief of Police**

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Honorable Mayor, Charles Nickolay; Members of the City Council, Shawn Ryan, Maggie Bass, Bruce Wolf, Rik Seiler and City Administrator, Joshua Tetzlaff

**From:** Tim Applen, Police Chief / Emergency Manager

**Date:** December 10, 2025

**Subject:** Purchase of two Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)

This memo requests City Council approval for the purchase of two Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) to enhance operational capabilities for the New Prague Police Department and support other City functions such as building inspections, emergency management, and planning.

The use of drones in law enforcement has become a widely adopted best practice. Agencies throughout Minnesota and across the country utilize UAS for search and rescue, crime scene documentation, traffic crash reconstruction, active incident overwatch, and disaster response. These tools allow officers to operate more efficiently and safely, often providing real-time situational awareness without placing personnel in harm's way.

Drones provide a safer, faster, and more efficient way to conduct building inspections and mapping. They allow staff to inspect roofs, facades, and hazardous areas without climbing ladders or scaffolding, reducing risk to personnel. High-resolution and thermal cameras capture detailed imagery that improves documentation, identifies issues earlier, and supports code enforcement and maintenance planning. Drones also produce accurate maps and 3D models for site planning, storm-damage assessment, and engineering projects—saving time and reducing the need for expensive lifts, contractors, or manual surveys. Overall, drone technology enhances safety, lowers costs, and strengthens the City's ability to manage infrastructure and development.

Minnesota Statute §626.19 regulates law-enforcement UAS use and requires strict reporting, data retention limits, and annual public disclosure. The NPPD is prepared to comply fully with all statutory requirements and has drafted an internal UAS policy consistent with state law and best-practice guidelines.

The department proposes purchasing **two DJI Matrice 4TD UAS units**, which would provide:

- High-resolution video and still imaging
- Thermal/infrared capability for nighttime or low-visibility searches
- Live streaming to command staff during critical incidents
- Automated flight safety features (GPS stabilization, obstacle avoidance, geofencing)
- Built-in redundancy to ensure operational readiness even if one unit is unavailable for maintenance
- Loudspeaker
- Spotlight
- Rain / Snow Weatherproof

Only officers and city staff trained and certified under FAA Part 107 will be authorized to operate the drones. The department plans to train officers, ensuring adequate coverage across all shifts. Additionally, city staff will also be trained to operate the drones for inspections, mapping, or other designated uses.

The estimated cost for the two drones, including accessories, is **\$24,598.00**. This includes:

- Aircraft and batteries
- Camera and thermal modules
- Controller units
- Protective cases
- Software/licensing

Funding is proposed to come from current crime prevention funds in accordance with MN State Statute §609.5315.

**Recommendation:** Approve purchase of two Matrice 4TD Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) from Vertex Unmanned Solutions for \$24,598.00.