

AN ACT

relating to certain images captured by an unmanned aircraft.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 423.002(a), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a) It is lawful to capture an image using an unmanned aircraft in this state:

(1) for the purpose of professional or scholarly research and development or for another academic purpose by a person acting on behalf of an institution of higher education or a private or independent institution of higher education, as those terms are defined by Section 61.003, Education Code, including a person who:

(A) is a professor, employee, or student of the institution; or

(B) is under contract with or otherwise acting under the direction or on behalf of the institution;

(2) in airspace designated as a test site or range authorized by the Federal Aviation Administration for the purpose of integrating unmanned aircraft systems into the national airspace;

(3) as part of an operation, exercise, or mission of any branch of the United States military;

(4) if the image is captured by a satellite for the

1 purposes of mapping;

2 (5) if the image is captured by or for an electric or
3 natural gas utility or a telecommunications provider:

4 (A) for operations and maintenance of utility or
5 telecommunications facilities for the purpose of maintaining
6 utility or telecommunications system reliability and integrity;

7 (B) for inspecting utility or telecommunications
8 facilities to determine repair, maintenance, or replacement needs
9 during and after construction of such facilities;

10 (C) for assessing vegetation growth for the
11 purpose of maintaining clearances on utility or telecommunications
12 easements; and

13 (D) for utility or telecommunications facility
14 routing and siting for the purpose of providing utility or
15 telecommunications service;

16 (6) with the consent of the individual who owns or
17 lawfully occupies the real property captured in the image;

18 (7) pursuant to a valid search or arrest warrant;

19 (8) if the image is captured by a law enforcement
20 authority or a person who is under contract with or otherwise acting
21 under the direction or on behalf of a law enforcement authority:

22 (A) in immediate pursuit of a person law
23 enforcement officers have reasonable suspicion or probable cause to
24 suspect has committed an offense, not including misdemeanors or
25 offenses punishable by a fine only;

26 (B) for the purpose of documenting a crime scene
27 where an offense, not including misdemeanors or offenses punishable

1 by a fine only, has been committed;

2 (C) for the purpose of investigating the scene
3 of:

4 (i) a human fatality;

5 (ii) a motor vehicle accident causing death
6 or serious bodily injury to a person; or

7 (iii) any motor vehicle accident on a state
8 highway or federal interstate or highway;

9 (D) in connection with the search for a missing
10 person;

11 (E) for the purpose of conducting a high-risk
12 tactical operation that poses a threat to human life; ~~or~~

13 (F) of private property that is generally open to
14 the public where the property owner consents to law enforcement
15 public safety responsibilities; or

16 (G) of real property or a person on real property
17 that is within 25 miles of the United States border for the sole
18 purpose of ensuring border security;

19 (9) if the image is captured by state or local law
20 enforcement authorities, or a person who is under contract with or
21 otherwise acting under the direction or on behalf of state
22 authorities, for the purpose of:

23 (A) surveying the scene of a catastrophe or other
24 damage to determine whether a state of emergency should be
25 declared;

26 (B) preserving public safety, protecting
27 property, or surveying damage or contamination during a lawfully

1 declared state of emergency; or

2 (C) conducting routine air quality sampling and
3 monitoring, as provided by state or local law;

4 (10) at the scene of a spill, or a suspected spill, of
5 hazardous materials;

6 (11) for the purpose of fire suppression;

7 (12) for the purpose of rescuing a person whose life or
8 well-being is in imminent danger;

9 (13) if the image is captured by a Texas licensed real
10 estate broker in connection with the marketing, sale, or financing
11 of real property, provided that no individual is identifiable in
12 the image;

13 (14) ~~[of real property or a person on real property~~
14 ~~that is within 25 miles of the United States border,~~

15 ~~[(15)]~~ from a height no more than eight feet above
16 ground level in a public place, if the image was captured without
17 using any electronic, mechanical, or other means to amplify the
18 image beyond normal human perception;

19 (15) ~~[(16)]~~ of public real property or a person on
20 that property;

21 (16) ~~[(17)]~~ if the image is captured by the owner or
22 operator of an oil, gas, water, or other pipeline for the purpose of
23 inspecting, maintaining, or repairing pipelines or other related
24 facilities, and is captured without the intent to conduct
25 surveillance on an individual or real property located in this
26 state;

27 (17) ~~[(18)]~~ in connection with oil pipeline safety and

1 rig protection;

2 (18) [~~(19)~~] in connection with port authority
3 surveillance and security;

4 (19) [~~(20)~~] if the image is captured by a registered
5 professional land surveyor in connection with the practice of
6 professional surveying, as those terms are defined by Section
7 [1071.002](#), Occupations Code, provided that no individual is
8 identifiable in the image; [~~or~~]

9 (20) [~~(21)~~] if the image is captured by a professional
10 engineer licensed under Subchapter G, Chapter [1001](#), Occupations
11 Code, in connection with the practice of engineering, as defined by
12 Section [1001.003](#), Occupations Code, provided that no individual is
13 identifiable in the image; or

14 (21) if:

15 (A) the image is captured by an employee of an
16 insurance company or of an affiliate of the company in connection
17 with the underwriting of an insurance policy, or the rating or
18 adjusting of an insurance claim, regarding real property or a
19 structure on real property; and

20 (B) the operator of the unmanned aircraft is
21 authorized by the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct
22 operations within the airspace from which the image is captured.

23 SECTION 2. The change in law made by this Act applies only
24 to an offense committed on or after the effective date of this Act.
25 An offense committed before the effective date of this Act is
26 governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed,
27 and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. For

1 purposes of this section, an offense was committed before the
2 effective date of this Act if any element of the offense occurred
3 before that date.

4 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 840 passed the Senate on April 18, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0; and that the Senate concurred in House amendments on May 25, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 840 passed the House, with amendments, on May 23, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 142, Nays 5, one present not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

Approved:

Date

Governor