

Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs)

Seattle Police Department (SPD)

What is the technology?

Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) are unarmed remote controlled vehicles utilized by SPD SWAT, Arson/Bomb, and Harbor units to access areas that are potentially dangerous for personnel to physically enter.

All SPD ROVs are controlled by SPD employees operating handheld controllers from a safe position nearby. Some ROVs operated by SPD have a remotely controlled arm capable of performing simple tasks safely from a remote location.



Why do we use the technology?

The use of ROVs allows tactical units to assess potentially dangerous situations from a safe position. By entering an environment with the additional information obtained using remote cameras, or having rendered-safe a suspicious package, SPD personnel and community members are safer.

The Harbor unit utilizes the ROVs to perform necessary underwater search and recovery functions that would not be possible with manned diving alone.

The open comment period for this technology is currently underway. You can provide comments to [Seattle.gov/SurveillanceComment](https://seattle.gov/SurveillanceComment).

All comments will be included in the Surveillance Impact Report on this technology and submitted to Council.

If you would like to provide feedback outside of the open comment period, please submit them

Collection

No images or data are stored or retained by ROVs used by the SWAT or Arson/Bomb units. The Harbor unit ROVs store video and sonar imagery captured during each deployment of the unit. Only images directly related to the specific search and recovery are manually exported from the ROV's onboard hard drive if requested by SPD detectives for follow up investigation.

Use

SPD utilizes this technology to disarm potentially hazardous devices, assess potentially dangerous situations, obtain real-time information about the situational environment, and perform underwater search and recovery operations. Authorized members of for the SPD SWAT, Arson/Bomb, and Harbor units are given training in the use and appropriate use and application of these ROVs.

Protections

There is no legal standard or condition for the use of these ROVs in non-protected public areas, such as a hotel hallway or public waterway. However, if the use of the ROV is to occur inside a protected area, such as in a person's home or property, absent exigent circumstances, or consent, a signed warrant is obtained from a judge.