

Drones in Schools

Rules, regulation and the associated risks of using drones in schools

The use of remote controlled unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones in our schools has increased as technology has advanced and drones have become less expensive to purchase.

Before taking flight with drones to enhance the learning experience, school boards must consider that these drones are flying in Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) controlled airspace and the FAA has regulations and rules that school boards should be aware of. Here are some pertinent rules and regulations:

- 1) Unless you are flying for hobby or recreational purposes you will need FAA authorization via a Section 333 grant of exemption to fly an UAV. Currently, accredited educational institutions do fall under the definition of “hobby or recreational purposes” under certain circumstances. In general the following must apply to be considered “hobby or recreational” within a school:
 - a. There can be no compensation tied directly to the demonstration or sole instruction of operating a UAV.
 - b. The operation of a UAV by a student must be one component of a broader curricula. Stand-alone courses on flying a UAV are considered commercial and require FAA authorization.

- c. Faculty may assist students in connection with a course that requires UAV operations, provided the student maintains operational control of the UAV, and the faculty participation is incidental and secondary to the student.
- 2) Drones cannot be flown within five nautical miles (about 6 standard miles) of an airport. If a drone is going to be flown within this distance to an airport, one must obtain a letter of agreement with that airport’s management if not otherwise permitted by a Certificate of Waiver (COA) issued to the exemption holder.
- 3) A drone cannot fly higher than 400 feet above ground level and must be operated within visual line of sight of the pilot-in-command at all times. This requires the operator/pilot to be able to use human vision unaided by any device other than corrective lenses, as specified on the pilot’s FAA-issued airman medical certificate or driver’s license.
- 4) Do not fly over populated areas or over people.
While this is a regulation, it is also a good risk management tip. There have been incidents



of people losing fingers and their faces being maimed, resulting in required plastic surgery due to the power of the fast moving propellers of UAV’s. It is recommended to stay at least 25 feet away from people and vehicles.

- 5) All drones must be registered with the Federal Aviation Administration (*see “For More Information” on the next page*). A \$5 fee applies.
- 6) The UAV is typically between .55 and 55 pounds in weight; however this depends on what the exemption grants. Less than 55 pounds is most common, and further, the exemption outlines which models the exemption holder is authorized to operate.
- 7) Do not fly drones anywhere near manned aircraft.
- 8) The FAA recommends that the drone be flown at a local model airplane club as they will be

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very clear on the regulations and have open space. If a local club is not accessible, then it is recommended to fly over an area that is not populated.

- 9) Stay away from situations that may be considered an invasion of privacy.

Of course, school boards always want to have an adult properly trained on the regulations, proper operation of the drone, and safety procedures when operating the UAV. Tom McMahon of the Association of Unmanned Vehicle Association says that most drones have very thorough instructions that come with the drone when bought new and further training can be found at <http://bit.ly/fly-robotics>. Lastly, The Academy of Model Aeronautics' website ([\[flightschool.com\]\(http://flightschool.com\)\) has resources and learning opportunities for UAV users.](http://ama-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

A reasonable estimate for the cost of insuring drones under 55 pounds is about \$1,000 annually for a \$1,000,000 limit, and there are higher limits available for an additional premium. The coverages might include aircraft liability, physical damage to the drone itself (optional physical damage coverage for camera systems), premises liability, and non-owned aircraft liability. Aircraft are excluded on your school's package policy. If you have any questions feel free to contact Tom McGreevey of Arthur J. Gallagher of Wisconsin at Tom_McGreevey@ajg.com 920-380-2223. ■

Arthur J. Gallagher of Wisconsin is an endorsed agency through the WASB Insurance Plan. For more information, visit wasb.org and select "WASB Insurance Plan."

POLICY MATTERS

The June issue of *The FOCUS*, WASB's comprehensive policy publication, will discuss drone usage in schools and related policy issues. *The FOCUS* is available on a subscription basis. For more information, visit wasb.org. Select "Policy" and then "Policy Publications."

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the safe operations of hobby and enthusiast drones, refer to the website knowbeforeyoufly.org. This website is a result of a collaboration of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) and the Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI). **To register a UAV/drone** with the Federal Aviation Administration, visit the website registermyuas.faa.gov.



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