UAS OPERATIONS NEAR AIRPORTS

Guidelines for Model Aircraft (Hobbyist) Operations

By federal law, when flown within 5 statute miles of an airport, a model aircraft operator is required to give prior notice of the operation to the airport or air traffic control tower. The model aircraft operator is not seeking permission, as operations within five miles of the airport cannot be prohibited or prevented by Airport Operators. The Airport Operator can however object to the proposed use of a model aircraft if the proposed activity endangers the safety of the airspace around the airport. Specific reasons for the objection should be provided to the model aircraft operator at the time of the request.

Model Aircraft Safety Guidelines

- Fly at or below 400 feet
- Keep your UAS within line of sight
- Avoid flying near manned aircraft, above stadiums, or above groups of people
- Avoid flying near emergency response efforts such as fires.
- Aircraft must be registered with the FAA (more than 0.55 pounds)
- Be aware of airspace requirements like Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR), Restricted, etc.

Questions for the Model Aircraft Operator

- What is your name and contact information?
- Where do you plan to fly?
- What altitude will you be flying (maximum)?
- What time will you be flying?
- How long will you be flying?
- What is the make/model of the aircraft you are flying?
- How can I contact you while you are flying?

It is best practice for Airport Operators to document all UAS operations conducted at or within five miles from their airport.

Best Practices for Airport Operators

- Be familiar with the manned aircraft operating areas within five statute miles of the airport and share this information with the operator of the model aircraft
- Based on the answers to the questions above, be able to describe to the model aircraft operator whether the proposed flight interferes with normal manned aircraft flight
- Provide the model aircraft operator information on any special or unusual activity occurring at the airport during the proposed model aircraft flight (e.g., skydiving, low flying agricultural aircraft, helicopters, etc.)
- Ask the model aircraft operator to notify the air traffic control facility, if one is located at the airport
- Ask the model aircraft operator to contact other airports that may also be within five statute miles of the proposed flight

Have More Questions?
Visit the FAA’s Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the use of model aircraft near an Airport at https://www.faa.gov/uas/faqs/.