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FAA (12-21-2015) Registration of Drones, Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the definition of a UAS? Is it different from a drone?

A. A UAS is an unmanned aircraft system. A drone and a UAS are the same for registration purposes.

Q: Does the FAA have the authority to require registration of UAS used by modelers and hobbyists?

A: Yes. By statute all aircraft are required to register. Congress has defined "aircraft" to include UAS, regardless of whether they are operated by modelers and hobbyists.

Q: What is the penalty for failing to register?

A: Failure to register an aircraft may result in regulatory and criminal sanctions. The FAA may assess civil penalties up to \$27,500. Criminal penalties include fines of up to \$250,000 and/or imprisonment for up to three years.

Q: Will an operator be required to have proof of registration while operating the UAS?

A: Yes. You will be required to have your FAA registration certificate in your possession when operating your unmanned aircraft.

Q. Why do I need to register?

A. Federal law requires aircraft registration. Registration helps us ensure safety – for you, others on the ground, and manned aircraft. UAS pose new security and privacy challenges and must be traceable in the event of an incident. It will also help enable the return of your UAS should it be lost.

Q. Where can I find information about operating my UAS safely?

A. You can find safety and operating guidance on the internet at www.faa.gov/uas/model_aircraft. The unmanned aircraft systems website contains important safety guidance as well as other facts and information.

What's covered by the new registration system?

Q. Who is required to register on the new online UAS registration website?

A. Only individual recreational or hobby users who meet U.S. citizenship requirements are able to register their unmanned aircraft using this new streamlined web-based process. This new, faster and easier system will be available for other UAS owners soon.

Q. Which unmanned aircraft may register under the new registration requirements?

A. Unmanned aircraft weighing less than 55 pounds and more than 0.55 pounds (250 grams) on takeoff, including everything that is on board or otherwise attached to the aircraft and operated outdoors in the national airspace system must register. These aircraft may register under the new web-based registration system.

Q. Is there a weight limit on what requires registration?

A. All owners of small UAS weighing more than 250 grams (0.55 lbs.) and less than 55 lbs. must register using this new system

Q. Do children's toys need to be registered?

A. Not if they weigh below 250 gm/0.55 lb. or less. Most "toys" the FAA has identified at a purchase price of \$100 or less have been determined to weigh less than 250g.

Q. Do I have to register a paper airplane, or a toy balloon or Frisbee?

A. No. Even if these things could be considered "drones" or "unmanned aircraft" and met the minimum weight threshold of 250 gm/0.55 lb., the registration rules also require that they be a part of an "unmanned aircraft system." An "unmanned aircraft system" includes the communication links and components that control the small unmanned aircraft along with all of the other elements needed to safely operate the drone. Paper airplanes, toy balloons, Frisbees, and similar items are not connected to such control system.

Q. Where do I register if my unmanned aircraft weighs 55 pounds or more?

A. UAS that are 55 pounds or more must be registered using the current paper based system.

Q. Is the registration process different if you're a business versus a person?

A. The new system does not yet support registration of small UAS used in connection with a business. It will in the future. In the meantime, these entities must continue to register using the paper-based process.

Q. What about tethered drones?

A. Both tethered and untethered UAS must be registered.

Q. If I'm just flying it for fun in my yard, do I have to register it?

A. Yes, if the UAS weight is within the stated weights for registration.

Q. If I only fly it indoors, do I have to register it?

A. No, the FAA does not regulate indoor UAS use.

Q. Do homemade drones need to be registered?

A. Yes, if they fall within the weight criteria.

Q: Will the requirement apply to UAS that I owned and operated before the registration process existed?

A: Yes. Owners who purchased their UAS prior to Dec. 21, 2015 will have 60 days to register.

Q. Who must continue to register unmanned aircraft using the current paper-based Aircraft Registration System?

A. Any types of entities other than individual hobbyists (corporations, co-ownerships, partnerships, non-citizen corporations, and government), any small unmanned aircraft operating commercially or for reasons other than recreational or hobby, anyone wanting to operate outside the U.S., anyone with a UAS weighing 55 pounds or more and anyone wanting to record a lease or security interest must continue to register under the paper-based system at this time.

Q. Can I register a UAS under the new system using a paper form?

A. The new registration system is an online web-based system only, but you may use the older paper-based system if you prefer.

Q. Is there a minimum age requirement?

A. Yes. You must be 13 years of age or older before you are permitted to register an unmanned aircraft. If the owner is less than 13 years of age, then a person who is at least 13 years of age must register the unmanned aircraft.

Q. Is there a citizenship requirement?

A. Only United States citizens can register their small UAS. The certificate serves as a certificate of ownership for non-citizens, not a registration certificate.

Q. If I get a drone as a gift do I need to register?

A. Yes, unless the drone already has been registered in your name and you have the unique identification number. If the name or address registered is different from yours, you should update the registration to your name and address to aid in the return of your UAS if it is lost.

Q. What happens if I sell my drone?

A. You should log on to the registration website and update your registration information. We also strongly encourage you to remove your registration number from the drone before the transfer of ownership.

How to use the new registration process

Q. Where do I go to register my drone?

A. You can register your drone on FAA.gov beginning on December 21, 2015.

Q. When must I register?

A. You must register prior to operating the UAS outdoors.

Q. When will I be able to register on the UAS website?

A. The FAA UAS Registration website will be available starting December 21, 2015.

Q. What information will I be required to provide on the FAA UAS Registration website?

A. You must provide your complete name, physical address, mailing address, and an email address. The email address will be used as your login ID when you set up your account.

Q. Do I have to provide any information on my UAS?

A. Individual recreational users do not have to enter the make, model, and serial number. All non-recreational users will be required to provide the make, model, and serial number when the website is available to all other users.

Q. If I own multiple drones, do I have to register them all?

A. No. You may register once and apply the same registration number to all your UAS.

Q: Does it cost anything to register?

A: Federal law requires owners to pay \$5 to register their aircraft. However, registration is free for the first 30 days to encourage speedy registration of UAS. During the first 30 days, you must pay \$5 with a credit card and a \$5 credit will appear shortly afterwards.

Q. Why do I need to pay to register?

A. The fee will go to pay for the costs of creating the streamlined web-based registry system, and to maintain and improve this system. The FAA is legally required to charge a registration fee.

Q. The website said registration is free. Why am I being charged \$5?

A. The credit card transaction helps authenticate the user. You will see a credit for the \$5 shortly after the charge appears.

Q. When must UAS owners who purchased their aircraft before December 21, 2015 register?

A. UAS operated by the current owner prior to December 21, 2015, must be registered no later than February 19, 2016. For all other UAS, registration is required prior to operation.

Q. Is there a registration renewal requirement for UAS, like there is for manned aircraft?

A. Yes. You will be required to renew every three years and you must pay a \$5 renewal fee.

Q. What should I expect once I complete my registration on the UAS website?

A. You will receive a unique registration number that applies to any and all UAS that you own. You must mark all of your UAS with the unique registration number before operating. A registration certificate that contains the unique FAA registration number, the issue and expiration dates, and the name of the certificate holder will be sent to your email address immediately.

Certificate of Registration

Q. How do I prove I am registered?

A. A certificate of registration will be available to download and will be sent to your email address at the time of registration. When operating your UAS you must be able to present the certificate in either print or electronic format if asked for proof of registration.

Q. Do I have to have a printout of my certificate with me?

A. No. If you are asked to show your certificate of registration, you can show it electronically. You do not have to print the certificate.

Q. If I let someone borrow my drone do I have to give them the Certificate of Registration?

A. Yes, anyone who operates your drone must have the Certificate of Aircraft Registration in their possession. You can give them a paper copy, email it to them, or they can show it electronically from the registration website.

Q. Why does the certificate I received constitute recognition of registration for US citizens and permanent residents, but only recognition of ownership for foreign nationals? Have I complied with the requirement to register?

A. All users can submit information to the UAS registry; however, the law only permits the FAA to register aircraft belonging to United States citizens and permanent residents. For all others, the certificate received from the registry comprises a recognition of ownership, rather than a registration. Foreign nationals who have completed the recognition of ownership process and wish to receive a rebate for the \$5 registration fee may contact the FAA. Nonetheless, all users are encouraged to submit their information and mark their UAS. This will facilitate the recovery of the UAS, should it be lost or stolen.

Marking and operating your UAS before you fly

Q. Will my drone require an N-number or sticker?

A. No. You will receive a unique registration number, not an N-number, and you must mark the registration number on your UAS by some means that is legible and allows the number to be readily seen. The registration number may be placed in a battery compartment as long as it can be accessed without the use of tools.

Q. Is putting my AMA number on my drone enough?

A. No. Not at this time. The registration system will generate a unique FAA registration number, which you must mark on your aircraft.

Q. Would putting my contact information on my drone be enough?

A. No, you must mark it with the FAA registration number.

Q. How do I mark my unmanned aircraft with the unique registration number?

A. You may use any method to affix the number, such as permanent marker, label, engraving, or other means, as long as the number is readily accessible and maintained in a condition that is readable and legible upon close visual inspection. If your unmanned aircraft has an easily accessible battery compartment you may affix the number in that compartment.

Operating information

Q. May I operate my UAS once I register?

A. Completion of the registration process does not provide authorization to operate your UAS. Please refer to www.faa.gov/uas/faq for requirements pertaining to operating authorization.

Q. How high is 400 feet?

A. Typical buildings have floors that are 12-14 feet high. A 30-40 story building would be about 400 feet high. If you lose sight of your unmanned aircraft, it is probably above 400 feet.

Privacy

Q. Who can see the data that I can enter?

A. The FAA will be able to see the data that you enter. The FAA is using a contractor to maintain the website and database, and that contractor also will be able to see the data that you enter. Like the FAA, the contractor is required to comply with strict legal requirements to protect the confidentiality of the personal data you provide. Under certain circumstances, law enforcement officers might also be able to see the data.

Q. Will my email address be used for other purposes? Will you make it available to other agencies or companies?

A. No.

Q. Why is the current Aircraft Registry fully searchable but this one is not?

A. The current Aircraft Registry is most frequently used to record the documents used to secure the financing of the aircraft and to aid in proof of ownership. Full searchability of that portion of the Aircraft Registry is needed to enable those purposes. It is much less likely that UAS in the .55 pound to 55 pounds category will require secured financing or need to affirmatively prove ownership. The Government, in accordance with the requirements of the Privacy Act, protects and generally does not release personal information. Given the nature of UAS, in particular, the risk that the communications link between the operator of the UAS is disrupted or lost, and the risk of losing the UAS is larger than it is for other types of aircraft. Allowing searches of the unique identifying number of UAS will enable the return of these aircraft to their owners.

Other questions on the registry

Q: A pilot cannot read a number on a drone so how will registering protect traditional aircraft?

A: A registration requirement encourages a culture of accountability and responsibility. Much like registering a motor vehicle, registering a drone ties a specific person to a specific aircraft. Greater accountability will help protect innovation, which is in danger of being undermined by reckless behavior. This requirement mirrors the requirement for manned operations and commercial UAS operations.

Q: Someone intent on harm will not register a drone, so doesn't this requirement just penalize responsible people who are excited about UAS?

A: Although no system or requirement is 100 percent effective against people intent on doing harm, registration heightens public awareness about what safe UAS operations look like. In addition, registration establishes a shared understanding that operating this type of aircraft for business or pleasure comes with certain responsibilities and expectations and that the public will be watching for and reporting bad actors, just as they do today for other safety and security-related concerns. Registration also enables us to educate UAS owners on safe operations.

Q. How do I find out how much my drone weighs?

A. A consumer kitchen or postal scale that measures in ounces or grams is an easy and convenient method. The weight limit is only for the flying portion of the Unmanned Aircraft System and does not include the weight of the controller.

Q. Is the weight on the box the weight of the drone?

A. Not necessarily. If you add a camera or anything else to the drone, it may change the weight. To be sure, you should weigh it.

Q. If I don't have a scale and my drone doesn't appear on the list is there another method to tell how much it weighs?

A. Two sticks of butter weigh 0.5lbs.

Q. If a drone crashes in my yard what do I do?

A. Call local law enforcement.

Q. Is there a limit to how many drones I can own?

A. No

Q. If I register and then give the drone as a gift am I liable for its use?

A. Laws governing liability for damage caused by drones vary by state. If the gift recipient is a minor, in some states you might have some liability if the drone causes damage. For federal civil aviation law purposes, the operator of the drone is liable for its use.

Q. I am a citizen of a foreign country who lives in the United States. How do I know if I can register a drone with the FAA?

A. Federal law allows an individual citizen of another country who has been lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States under the regulations of the Department of Homeland Security to register an aircraft, including a drone, with the FAA.

Q. If the State or town I live requires me to register my drone, do I still need to register it with the FAA?

A. Yes. Federal law requires that all aircraft, including drones, be registered with the FAA prior to operation in the US. Carolina Dronz suggest you read this document and follow the law!

Special thanks to Darren Wilson at Wilson Drone Works for compiling this FAQ.