



Australian Government
Civil Aviation Safety Authority

KEY PERSONNEL GUIDE REOC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)



WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR:

- Chief executive officers (CEO) of remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS) organisations
- Managing directors or accountable managers performing CEO functions
- Remotely piloted aircraft operator's certificate (ReOC) holders and applicants
- Senior managers overseeing RPAS operations
- Personnel responsible for recruiting or assessing CEO candidates

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
THE ROLE	3
QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE	5
ONGOING QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE	5
RESPONSIBILITIES	6
COMMON RISKS AND CHALLENGES	9
RELATED GUIDANCE	9



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INTRODUCTION

Every remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS) operator has a responsibility to conduct safe operations. Safe operations rely on more than technical capability and regulatory compliance. Leadership, workplace culture and clear operational oversight also play an important role.

Many remotely piloted aircraft operator's certificate (ReOC) holders appoint a chief executive officer (CEO) or accountable manager to provide leadership, organisational oversight and safety accountability.

The CEO role is not defined in legislation as a required position. However, if the role is included in the organisation's documented practices and procedures, it becomes part of the operator's approved management structure.

The CEO sets the organisation's safety expectations, including how safety is prioritised, managed and communicated. They also help shape workplace culture through everyday decisions, actions and priorities.

This guide explains our expectations for the responsibilities, authority and oversight typically exercised by a CEO. It should be read with the organisation's documented practices and procedures, ReOC conditions, Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998 (CASR) Part 101 and the Part 101 Manual of Standards (MOS).

Reference regulation 101.335 of CASR.

THE ROLE

The CEO helps ensure the organisation has the people, systems, facilities and resources needed for safe operations. This includes supporting personnel and managing risk as well as ensuring commercial or operational pressures do not affect safe decision-making.

Effective CEOs stay engaged and remain aware of day-to-day operations, emerging risks and organisational performance. This is particularly important in growing organisations or operations conducted across several locations.

Depending on the size and complexity of the operation, the CEO may also perform other operational or management roles within the organisation. In smaller organisations or sole traders, one person may hold several responsibilities.

Operators should carefully consider whether the person has enough time, support and operational involvement to perform each role effectively.

Duties may be delegated to suitably qualified personnel. However, the organisation should ensure delegated responsibilities remain appropriately supervised by the nominated CEO.

The organisation should clearly define the CEO's responsibilities, authority and reporting lines within its documented practices and procedures. The CEO should have sufficient authority, operational awareness and organisational support to effectively perform the role.

We may review organisational structures, management arrangements and nominated personnel during ReOC application, variation and oversight activities.



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QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The CEO should demonstrate suitable knowledge, experience and leadership capability for the size and complexity of the operation.

The role requires an understanding of:

- the organisation's operations and operational risks
- CASR Part 101 and the Part 101 MOS
- the organisation's documented practices and procedures
- safety management principles
- organisational governance and accountability.

The CEO should also demonstrate:

- leadership and decision-making skills
- effective communication skills
- the ability to manage operational and organisational risk
- the ability to balance operational, safety and commercial pressures appropriately.

The CEO should hold enough authority within the organisation to make decisions affecting operational safety, resourcing and risk management.

In smaller organisations, the CEO may also undertake operational duties. In these cases, operators should ensure the person has enough operational knowledge and management capability to perform both functions effectively.

ONGOING QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The CEO should maintain an ongoing understanding of the organisation's operations, risks and regulatory responsibilities. This includes remaining familiar with changes to legislation, approvals, procedures and day-to-day operations.

The CEO should also maintain regular engagement with operational personnel and participate in appropriate safety and assurance activities.

Organisations should ensure the CEO receives appropriate information about operational performance, occurrence reporting, safety trends and emerging risks.

As operations grow or change, the organisation may need additional management support or specialist personnel to maintain good oversight.

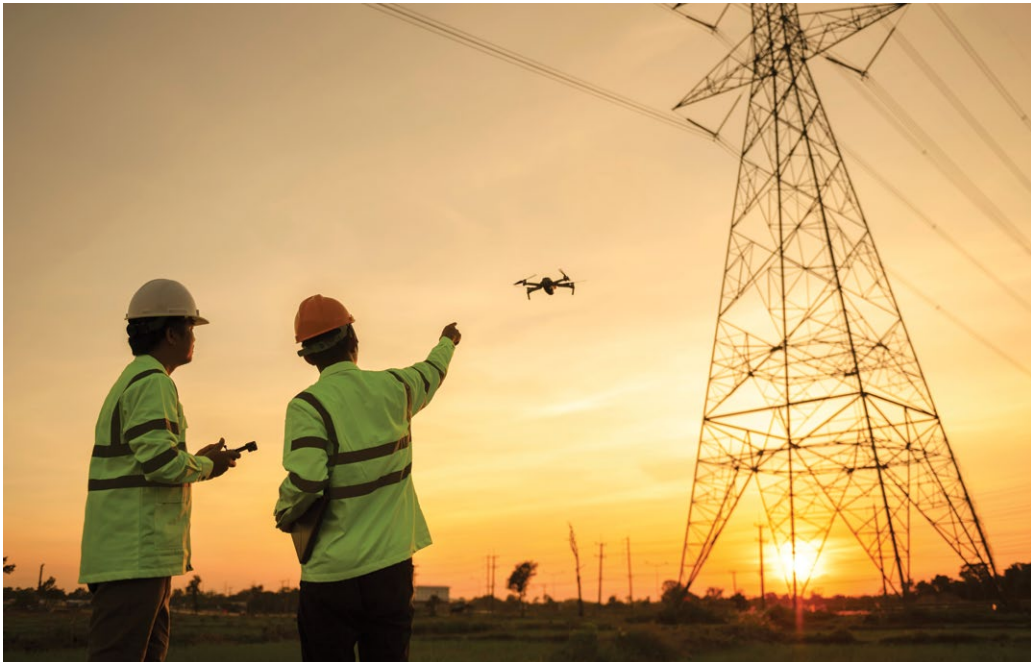


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RESPONSIBILITIES

Safe operations require clear leadership, accountability and organisational oversight. The CEO ensures personnel receive the support, resources and authority needed to operate safely and comply with regulatory requirements.

Safety leadership

Operational personnel often look to senior managers to understand how safety is viewed within an organisation. The CEO helps establish these expectations through communication, decision-making and everyday behaviour.

A healthy safety culture is one where:

- safety remains a core organisational priority
- personnel feel comfortable raising safety concerns

- reporting and learning are encouraged
- standards and responsibilities remain clear
- operational pressures do not override safe decision-making
- managers lead by example.

The CEO plays an important role in creating an environment where personnel understand their responsibilities and feel supported to contribute to safer operations.

This includes:

- promoting a positive safety culture
- supporting open reporting of safety concerns
- encouraging reporting and learning
- supporting continuous improvement activities
- ensuring personnel can report hazards and occurrences without fear of reprisal.

Governance and oversight

Effective governance helps ensure operations remain safe, compliant and appropriately supervised.

The CEO should ensure the organisation:

- complies with the ReOC conditions and civil aviation legislation
- maintains current documented practices and procedures
- clearly defines organisational responsibilities and reporting lines
- appropriately manages corrective actions and identified safety issues
- supports nominated personnel to effectively perform their responsibilities.

The CEO should also ensure organisational structures remain appropriate for the size, complexity and nature of the operation.

Reference regulations 101.335 and 101.340 of CASR.

Resources and staffing

Safe operations rely on adequate staffing, facilities and operational support.

The CEO should ensure the organisation remains appropriately resourced and personnel are suitably qualified, competent and available to perform their duties safely.

This includes considering workload, operational pressure, fatigue risks and the ongoing support needed for personnel to effectively perform operational and safety-related responsibilities.

The level of support and resources provided to operational personnel often reflects how safety is viewed across the organisation. Safety oversight should not be treated as a compliance exercise alone.

Safety assurance

Regular review and monitoring helps identify safety issues before they become larger operational risks.

The CEO should ensure the organisation:

- monitors operational performance and safety trends
- reviews audit findings, hazard reports and occurrence reports
- supports appropriate review and assurance activities
- establishes appropriate safety performance measures
- addresses identified deficiencies in a timely way.

Effective CEOs use operational information and safety reporting to support informed decision-making and continuous improvement.

Engagement with CASA

The CEO plays an important role in maintaining effective regulatory engagement and oversight.

This includes ensuring we receive required notifications, supporting oversight activities and ensuring significant organisational or operational changes receive approval where required.

The CEO should also ensure we are notified of changes to nominated personnel or organisational details where safety may be affected.

Reference regulation 101.355 of CASR.



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COMMON RISKS AND CHALLENGES

Many organisations operate in fast-changing environments with evolving technology, expanding operations and competing commercial pressures. These conditions can create challenges for organisational oversight, communication and safety management.

Effective leadership helps organisations maintain clear responsibilities, appropriate resourcing and consistent operational oversight as they grow and evolve.

Areas requiring ongoing attention may include:

- ensuring staffing and resources remain appropriate for the operation
- maintaining clear accountability and reporting lines
- supporting effective communication between management and operational personnel
- maintaining oversight across expanding or geographically dispersed operations
- monitoring corrective actions and organisational improvements
- managing operational pressures that may influence safety-related decision-making.

The CEO plays an important role in recognising emerging risks early and ensuring appropriate systems, support and safety oversight remain in place as the organisation changes.

RELATED GUIDANCE

- Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998 (CASR) Part 101
- Part 101 Manual of Standards (MOS)
- Remotely piloted aircraft operator's certificate (ReOC) guidance
- Documented practices and procedures guidance
- Safety management system guidance
- Advisory Circular (AC) 101 series guidance material.

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