



Australian Government

Civil Aviation Safety Authority

Drone safety rules and standard operating conditions video transcript

With more drones in Australian skies than ever before, it's important that you understand the rules that keep you and others safe.

If you're using a drone, or remotely piloted aircraft, for work or business, there are specific rules that apply to you. Flying a drone or RPA commercially means flying for any type of hire or reward. This could be as simple as taking photos for a real estate listing that you put up on a website or using the data your drone has collected over a construction site to generate income. Commercial flying also includes research and development — this means anything that isn't flying for sport or recreation.

If you're flying an RPA that weighs between 250 g and 2 kg or you're flying over your own land using an RPA that is between 250 g and 25 kg, this means you're flying — or planning to fly — under the excluded category.

Operating in this category means you must follow the standard operating conditions and keep proper records about your operations. CASA can ask to see your records at any time.

Before you fly, make sure you read and understand the material provided by CASA about operating in the excluded category.

Before you fly, you will need to complete a quiz to get accredited, unless you already hold a valid Remote Pilot Licence. It's free and lasts for three years and provides you with an accreditation certificate for flying and supervising others. Anyone under 16 will need to be supervised by an accredited adult.

All RPAs intended to be flown commercially will also need to be registered, regardless of their weight. Registration is easy and can be completed through the Civil Aviation Safety Authority's website.

The rules are simple.

When your RPA is up in the air, you can never fly it over anyone. This includes places like festivals, sporting events, family events, populated beaches, busy roads and pedestrians on footpaths. When there are people around, your RPA must be at

least 30 m away from them, unless the other person is helping control or navigate the RPA. You'll need to take steps to ensure people don't walk into your area of operation.

You can only fly one RPA at a time, and it can't go any higher than 120 m — that's 400 ft or about the length of a football field.

RPA may be aircraft, but they can't fly anywhere near major airports. If your RPA weighs more than 250 g, you must fly at least 5.5 km away from a controlled airport, which generally have a control tower at them.

If you're near a helicopter landing site or smaller aerodrome without a control tower, you can fly your RPA within 5.5 km. You can only do this if manned aircraft are not operating in the area, if you're not within the airport itself or flying in areas where aircraft will arrive and depart, known as the approach or departure paths. If you become aware of manned aircraft nearby, you will have to manoeuvre away and land your RPA as quickly and safely as possible.

You can only fly your RPA during daylight hours, and you mustn't fly in cloud or fog. You must keep it within your visual line-of-sight. This means being able to navigate, orientate and see your RPA with your own eyes at all times — not through a device like a video screen or goggles.

And you can't fly your RPA in a way that creates a hazard to other aircraft, person, or property. You must not fly over or near an area affecting public safety or where emergency operations are underway, without approval. This applies to situations like road accidents, bushfires, police activity, and search and rescue.

If you want to fly at night or closer than 30 m to people, we encourage you to get your Remote Pilot Licence and operate under an RPA Operator's Certificate.

As a commercial RPA operator, you might sometimes be asked by a client to do things that don't comply with the rules. Be prepared to say no to people who ask you to break these rules — breaking them could not only result in a fine, it could also hurt your business and void your insurance.

So, as a commercial RPA operator, it's important to know and understand the drone safety rules that apply to you.

Breaking the rules may land you in trouble. You can be fined or even taken to court.

By following these simple rules, we can all enjoy the air together.

For more information about where you can and can't fly, go to CASA's website and download a CASA-verified app.

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