



Updates Regarding Drone Operation at Hospitals

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As many of you may be aware, the sale and use of consumer drones has exploded in this country since 2014. In 2017 there are projected to be over 4.8 million drones in operation in the United States with that number increasing every year. This is due in part to their increased affordability as prices continue to drop, technological advancements, ease of operation, and the rapid expansion of applications for their use.

Drones operators are divided into three distinct groups: **commercial** (business), **public** (governmental agencies) and **hobbyists** (recreational) users. Each have their own specific operational rules and guidelines. All drone operators, with the exception of **hobbyists** (recreational) must register their drones that are between .55 and 55 pounds prior to flight.

The latest round of rule making for commercial drones was completed and definitive rules became effective as of August 29, 2016. The FAA will be making additional changes in 2017 as this is a very fluid process. Part 107 will be the primary process but the Section 333 Exemption will still be utilized by a very small number of commercial operators based upon the intended use of the drone. It is important to note that all drone operators must comply with temporary flight restrictions (TFRs) in your area. Recreational or hobbyist operators will continue to follow the same rules and guidelines as those have not changed. It is still important to note that a hospital heliport/helipad is considered an airport.

The **commercial** sector is regulated and controlled by the FAA currently through one of two different processes that entail applying for and receiving a Section 333 Exemption with a blanket certificate of authorization (COA) or through the new Part 107 rule to fly in the National Airspace (NAS). The Section 333 Exemption and Part 107 allows for the business use of a drone for specific purposes with clearly defined criteria. The criteria are listed in the chart named "Drone Operational Guidance Resource." *(See the bulleted list at the end of page 2 for location of this document.)*

If your organization has enlisted or is considering utilizing the services of a commercial drone operator via a contractor or the contractor operates their own drone, they should provide either their Part 107 or Section 333 Exemption Certificate. It is critical that during drone operation within proximity of a hospital heliport (2 nautical miles is a good guideline), all incoming aircraft are notified **prior** to their arrival.

Public or governmental entities such as law enforcement, fire/EMS, emergency management, public universities, etc., must apply for a COA or Part 107 Remote Pilot in Command to use the drone for agency work such as surveying disaster sites, firefighting, search and rescue, and research purposes. The COA is usually effective for one to two years.

Recreational or **hobbyist** operators make up the largest and most difficult to control group. When Congress enacted the 2012 FAA Reform and Modernization Act, the recreational users were excluded from the rule making due to the excellent safety record of the remote controlled (RC) operator category into which the hobbyists fall. Hence they fall under:

- **Public Law 112-95 Section 336** – https://www.faa.gov/uas/media/Sec_331_336_UAS.pdf
- **Advisory Circular 91-75A** –
http://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Advisory_Circular/AC_91-57A.pdf
- **Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) Safety Code** – <http://www.modelaircraft.org/files/105.pdf>

The problem has become that with the increased number of recreational operators, those new to drone ownership are either unaware of or choose to ignore the current rules and guidelines. A complete review of the rules and guidelines can be found via the above links.

If a recreational drone is observed to be operating near your facility and a medical helicopter is on site or inbound, it is imperative that the dispatch center for the medical helicopter and the flight crew is notified. The drone operator must be found and the drone grounded until the aircraft has departed the area.

As you can see this is a problem that can have huge consequences for manned aircraft such as air medical helicopters, law enforcement and fire fighting aircraft as well as commercial and private planes who occupy the busiest airspace in the world. The safety of those onboard as well as those on the ground is being put at risk more than once a day. We are reaching out to you in hopes that sharing this background information and creating a dialogue will enhance safety for all concerned.

If you have any questions or concerns or need additional information please contact one of our Professional Relations Managers. Tammy Chatman may be reached at 414-791-6655, tchatman@mrmcfl.org or Jayce Commo at 920-251-9387, jcommo@mrmcfl.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO THESE WEBSITES:

- www.knowbeforeyoufly.org
- www.faa.gov/uas
- www.flightforlife.org, scroll down to **What's New?** and click on **Drones: Updated...Latest Info**, then click on **Drone Operational Guidance Resource**