




Federal Aviation Administration

Memorandum

Date: DEC 23 2015

To: Air Traffic Organization Service Centers Directors
Air Traffic Organization Air Traffic Service Area Directors
Air Traffic Control Towers and Federal Contract Towers

From: 
Heather Hemdal, Director, Air Traffic Procedures

Subject: Guidance for UAS ATCT Notification Calls

On Monday, December 21, 2015, the requirement to register drones or Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) takes effect. This registration includes UA's (Unmanned Aircraft) used as Model Aircraft operated by Hobbyists.

Registration will enhance the safety of the National Airspace System by educating UAS operators and reinforcing accountability. Current law requires a Model Aircraft operator to contact the airport and the Air Traffic Control Tower, if there is one at that airport, before flight if they will be operating within 5 miles of the airport. There is no blanket prohibition on flights within 5 miles of an airport.

Although the ATO is not publishing phone numbers to Air Traffic facilities, it is expected that numerous model aircraft operators will contact facilities either by phone or email. Upon notification, you are only required to acknowledge the notification and to the extent possible, complete the attached checklist. This checklist provides the necessary information to evaluate the operator's intentions and determine the safety of the operation. This basic information includes where they plan to fly; when they plan to fly; and how high they plan to fly and a method to contact the operator, if needed. If you deem the operation unsafe, you can deny the request and state the reason(s) for the denial. For example, if an operator tells you the location of planned operations and you are aware of helicopter operations in that vicinity, you should advise the operator of that condition and deny the operation.

Do not use the word "approved" in your communication with the operator. An approval implies consent and acknowledges the Air Traffic facility is waiving compliance of all CFRs by the operator.

If the operation does not present a hazard, then inform the operator you have received their notification and they have met their obligation to notify the facility. If questioned by the

caller if they are approved to fly, reiterate that you do not provide approval and that the caller has met their obligation to notify the facility.

The operator is responsible to remain clear of manned flights, to keep their vehicle in sight at ALL times, comply with any applicable CFRs, and comply with any registration requirements.

If you are made aware of any unsafe Model Aircraft activity, advise aircraft operating in the vicinity of the reports of the possible hazard, notify local law enforcement, submit a MOR for the incident and report the situation to the DEN immediately.

Thank you for your support and assistance. Please forward any questions or comments to Kevin Aurandt, AJV-83 En Route Procedures, (202) 267-0507.

ATCT MODEL AIRCRAFT NOTIFICATION CHECKLIST

If you receive a call notifying you that someone wants to operate a model aircraft within 5 miles of an airport, follow this checklist to gather information of the operation.

NOTE: Model aircraft cover a wide array of types, such as R/C (Remote Control) Airplanes & Helicopters and the newer UAS vehicles.

1. Ask the caller if they are operating as a Model Operator (Hobbyist) or as a Public (Fire/Police/Law) or other non-model aircraft (Business) operator. If it is for Public or non-model aircraft purposes, they should have a COA on file with the facility, if not, give them the website: WWW.FAA.GOV/UAS and inform the caller to apply for the appropriate permissions and you can end the call.
2. Ask the caller if they are flying within 5 miles of your airport, if they are not, inform them they do not need to be notifying you.
3. If they are flying as a Model Operator:
 - a. Complete as much of checklist as you can, information is voluntary, on the part of the caller.
 - b. If they give you a location you are not familiar with, ask their direction and distance from the airport.
 - c. If they are in an area where there is a potential flight hazard, you can deny the operation and inform them of the reason, i.e. manned aircraft in that area, Special Use Airspace, a heliport is nearby, etc.
 - d. If the caller requests to operate in an area where there is no perceived hazard, acknowledge the operation, do not use the word approved or imply approval.

ATCT MODEL AIRCRAFT CHECKLIST

1. Name of Caller: _____
2. Callers phone number: _____
3. UAS Registration number, if available: _____
4. Location of operation: _____
5. Start Time/Date Operation: _____
6. Duration of operation: _____
7. Description of UAS, if needed: _____
8. Maximum Operating Altitude: _____

Before ending the call, provide the operator the following recommendations:

1. If operation is denied, provide reason.
2. Be sure to keep your Model Aircraft in sight with your own eyes.
3. Always see and avoid all other aircraft.
4. Recommend that they stay below 400'AGL
5. Thank the caller for the notification.

FAA Personnel

If you observe or receive reports on unsafe UAS operations, advise aircraft in the vicinity of the reported hazard, contact local law enforcement for assistance, contact the DEN and file a MOR.

Retain this checklist with the daily records for 45 calendar days.

Time/Date of Call: _____

Operating Initials: _____ Op Denied Yes / No

If Denied, why: _____