

Safety Note #201

Unmanned Aircraft System (Drones)



Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS or commonly called “drones”) are increasingly used by UC academics and staff for a variety of research and extension activities. Many people may not realize that UAS are regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and there are restrictions on who, where, and when drones may be operated. The University of California has established an [Unmanned Aircraft System \(Drone\) Policy](#) and other guidance to help manage risk and ensure that UAS operations are compliant with regulations. UC has also established a Center for UAS

Safety (see <http://ucanr.edu/dronesafety>). Anyone who is operating a drone for University business (research, extension, operations, etc.) or on University property needs to adhere to this policy. This Safety Note provides a summary of some of the most important policy and regulatory concerns and resources to help ensure UAS operations are safe and compliant.

The UC policy includes requirements for registration of UAS, operator requests and approval, liability insurance, and export control. An online UC Drones app has been developed to assist with required planning, reporting and record-keeping. A UC login credential is required to access the UC Drones app at <http://ehs.ucop.edu/drones>.

Operators of UAS must:

- Obtain pilot registration and approval(s) prior to operating a UAS.
- Register aircraft with FAA and UC Drones application.
- Maintain safe UAS operations in compliance with FAA regulations and UC policy.
- Follow University UAS privacy best practices.
- Report UAS activity to the Systemwide UAS Authority via the UC Drones app.
- Immediately report any accident that results in injury or property damage.



In most cases, flight operations are restricted by the following conditions:

- A person operating an UAS must either 1) hold a Remote Pilot Certificate, or 2) be under the direct supervision of a Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC) who does hold a Remote Pilot Certificate.
- Unmanned aircraft must weigh less than 55 lbs. (25 kg).
- The aircraft must remain within Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) of the remote pilot in command and/operator.
- Daylight-only operations, night flights are not allowed.
- The aircraft may not exceed an altitude of 400' above ground level (other limits may apply in restricted airspace), or a maximum groundspeed of 100 mph (87 knots).
- Flights within 5 miles of a controlled airport require prior authorization.
- A UAS may not operate over any persons not directly participating in the operation.
- Minimum weather visibility of 3 miles from control station.

For more information, including detailed safety tips and a user guide for the UC Drone app, go to: <http://ucanr.edu/dronesafety>. If 3rd parties, such as contractors or visitors, want to operate drones on a UC ANR facility, please contact [Risk & Safety Services](#) for review.