



# Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) for Airport Operators Airports

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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)) about Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS (unmanned aircraft system) (unmanned aircraft system)) Operations on an Airport

Please check this page frequently as we continue to develop UAS-related guidance for airports. For more information, visit the [FAA UAS webpage \(www.faa.gov/uas/\)](http://www.faa.gov/uas/).

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)) below provide airport operators with an understanding of Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS (unmanned aircraft system)) operations from an airport perspective.

**For answers to general UAS questions, such as "What is the definition of an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS)?" or "What is a Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA)?", please visit the [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\) UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\) FAQs \(Frequently Asked Questions\) \(www.faa.gov/UAS/faq/\)](http://www.faa.gov/UAS/faq/). We strongly encourage reviewing the general FAQs in conjunction with those below as the information is complementary and meant to be read together as guidance to all users of the national airspace system.**

These [FAQs \(Frequently Asked Questions\)](#) identify:

- The types of [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) activity in the United States National Airspace System ([NAS \(National Airspace System\)](#)).
- The approvals necessary for [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operators to use the [NAS \(National Airspace System\)](#).
- Best practices to safely integrate [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operations at an airport.
- Actions the airport operator can take if a [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) is being operated in manner that could endanger the safety of the [NAS \(National Airspace System\)](#).

You can find further background information and supporting information at the Federal Aviation Administration's ([FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\)](#)'s) [UAS \(www.faa.gov/uas/\)](http://www.faa.gov/uas/) ([unmanned aircraft system](#)) [website \(www.faa.gov/uas/\)](http://www.faa.gov/uas/).

[UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) are permitted users of the National Airspace System ([NAS \(National Airspace System\)](#)), just like any existing manned aircraft flight. Congress confirmed in Public Law 112-95, the [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\) Modernization and Reform Act of 2012](#), that [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) are aircraft consistent with the statutory definition of an aircraft as set forth in Title 49 of U.S.C §40102(a) (6). This means that [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operators can utilize the [NAS \(National Airspace System\)](#) as long as the operator of the [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) meets all applicable laws and regulations and operates the [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) in a safe manner.

The FAA (Federal Aviation Administration)'s goal is to safely integrate UAS (unmanned aircraft system) into the NAS (National Airspace System). Safety of the NAS (National Airspace System) is enhanced when the operator of a UAS (unmanned aircraft system) and the airport operator coordinate prior to a UAS (unmanned aircraft system) flight on or near an airport. This coordination enhances integration into the NAS (National Airspace System) by:

- Allowing the airport operator to help the operator of the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) aircraft understand the areas of manned aircraft flight near the airport, reducing the potential for conflicts between UAS (unmanned aircraft system) activities and manned aircraft flights;
- Allowing the airport operator to understand the proposed parameters of the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) activities for situational awareness and coordination with airport tenants and users as necessary;
- Allowing the airport operator to advise the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator of unique manned aircraft activities near the airport (e.g., parachute activities, glider activities, etc.);
- Allowing the airport operator to understand where UAS (unmanned aircraft system) activities on or near the airport are occurring; and
- Encouraging coordination of the airport sponsor with the local Air Traffic Control (ATC) facilities, Flight Standards District Office (FSDO), and Airports District Office (ADO), and local law enforcement.

While these FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) will help the airport operator understand UAS (unmanned aircraft system) use of the NAS (National Airspace System), they are also intended to assist the airport operator in safely integrating these new users into the NAS (National Airspace System).

## FAQs

Does the FAA need to issue a COA for a UAS operation from an airport?

What is required for public UAS operations on or near my airport?

What is required for civil UAS operations on or within 5 nautical miles of my airport?

Why is a civil UAS operator asking for me to enter into a Letter of Agreement (LOA)?

A UAS operator proposes to operate from my airport. What questions could I ask the operator of a UAS?

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What topics could I consider for inclusion in a LOA?

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Can I prohibit a public UAS Operator from operating from my airport?

What rules must the operator of public UAS or civilian UAS follow when operating from my airport?

Should UAS operators pay fees to use my airport?

What should I do if I see a UAS being operated in a manner that could interfere with manned aircraft flight or other uses (e.g., skydiving, etc.)?

Does the FAA provide guidance on local and state regulation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)?

Who should I call if I have questions?

### 1. Does the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) need to issue a COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization) for a UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operation from an airport?

Yes. For both public UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operations and civil UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operations, the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) issues a Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) that permits the operation of a particular aircraft, for a particular purpose, in a particular area. Therefore, the COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization) would specifically authorize the public or civil UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operation from an airport. The FAA (Federal Aviation

Administration) conducts a safety assessment to determine that specific types of operations can be conducted safely in these instances. The [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#) also includes safety mitigations to ensure no adverse safety effect to other users of the [NAS \(National Airspace System\)](#).

A civil [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operator that wants to operate outside the limits of the "blanket [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#)", such as operating from an airport or within otherwise prohibited distances from an airport, must apply for and obtain a separate [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#) specific to the proposed flight on or near an airport. These are sometimes referred to as a "full [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#)". This type of [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#) will provide specific details and parameters of the permitted operation. Please note that the documentation for the "blanket [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#)" and the "full [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#)" may initially appear to be very similar and the [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\)](#) recommends obtaining the entire [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#) documentation from the UAS operator for review.

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## 2. What is required for public [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operations on or near my airport?

The public [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operator needs a [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#) issued by the [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\)](#).

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## 3. What is required for civil [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operations on or within 5 nautical miles of my airport?

The civil [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operator must have the following:

- A Section 333 exemption;
- A "full [COA \(Certificate of Waiver or Authorization\)](#)" issued by the [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\)](#) that authorizes the [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) to operate from or near your airport; and
- An executed letter of agreement with the airport sponsor.

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## 4. Why is a civil [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operator asking for me to enter into a Letter of Agreement (LOA)?

The Section 333 grant of exemption requires the civil UAS operator to obtain a letter of agreement from the airport operator when the [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) flight is within 5 nautical miles of the airport reference point.

In seeking the [LOA \(Letter of Agreement\)](#), the [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operator is working with the airport operator to outline in the [LOA \(Letter of Agreement\)](#) the operational needs of the [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) on or near the airport. The current [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\)](#) Policy to require the [LOA \(Letter of Agreement\)](#) is intended in part to assist in the safe integration of the [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) into the [NAS \(National Airspace System\)](#) by allowing the airport sponsor to increase the [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operator's understanding of the unique characteristics of the airport which ultimately helps the [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operator plan and conduct a safe flight. Please coordinate with the airport traffic control, if one is located at the airport, when preparing the [LOA \(Letter of Agreement\)](#).

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## 5. A [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) operator proposes to operate from my airport. What questions could I ask the operator of a [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#)?

- a. What is your name and contact information?

- b. Ask for a complete copy of the operator's COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization), Section 333 Exemption (if civilian-owned), and registration certificate. Please note that both the Public UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator and civil UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator need a COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization) that specifically authorizes operations from or near your airport. **A civil UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator cannot operate from or near an airport with a "blanket COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization)"; this UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator must have a "full COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization)" issued by the FAA in order to operator from or near an airport.** Please see Question 1 above.
- c. What are you flying (Make/Model)?
- Is there additional support equipment needed?
  - What is the color of the UAS (unmanned aircraft system)?
  - What is the weight of the UAS (unmanned aircraft system)?
  - What are your lost link procedures?
- d. Do you need access to runways/taxiways?
- If not, where on the airport property do you want to fly?
- e. When will you be conducting operations and for how long?
- f. At what altitude will you be flying (maximum)?
- g. Who can we contact while the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) is in flight? How do we contact your while you are operating the UAS (unmanned aircraft system)? Please note that not all COAs (Certificates of Waiver or Authorization) require aviation radios for communication or contact with air traffic, so consider other methods of contact such as a mobile phone.
- h. Describe how you intend to use the airport and airspace around the airport.

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## 6. What safety factors should I consider for a UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operating from my airport?

The specific type of UAS (unmanned aircraft system) activity planned for an airport will dictate the safety factors necessary to integrate the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) into existing airport activities. Safety factors you can consider include, but are not limited to:

- Runway safety.** Coordinate with the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator to ensure that controls are in place to prevent runway incursion.
- Safety of ground operations.** Determine if the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator needs access to runway or taxiway surfaces to launch and recover the UAS (unmanned aircraft system). If access is needed, ensure proper controls are in place to ensure the safety of ground operations in the aircraft operational areas. Ensure the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator is properly trained. Refer to FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) Advisory Circular 150/5210-20A, Ground Vehicle Operations to include Taxiing or Towing an Aircraft on Airports ([www.faa.gov/airports/resources/advisory\\_circulars/index.cfm/go/document.information/documentNumber/150\\_5210-20A](http://www.faa.gov/airports/resources/advisory_circulars/index.cfm/go/document.information/documentNumber/150_5210-20A)), for more information. If the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator wants to use movement areas on the airport with an Airport Traffic Control Tower, the specifics of the use of the movement area will be included in the COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization) document or a separate Letter of Agreement with the ATCT (Airport Traffic Control Tower).
- Maintain the airfield open and operational for other users of the NAS (National Airspace System).** Keeping the airfield operational areas clear for UAS (unmanned aircraft system) support vehicles and activities. Designate areas acceptable for the remotely-located pilot that are not in areas on the airfield that are needed to enhance airfield safety such as the runway safety areas, taxiway safety areas, object free areas, etc.
- Communication.** Coordinate with the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator and the local Airport Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) (if applicable) on the specific types of radio communications for the proposed UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operation. For example, what is the phraseology that is being used during the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operation to communicate with the ATCT (Airport Traffic Control Tower) or on the Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF) or Unicom? Please note that not all COAs (Certificates of Waiver or Authorization) require aviation radios for

(CTAF) or UNICOM? Please note that not all COAS (Certificates of Waiver or Authorization) require aviation radios for communication or contact with air traffic.

- e. **Coordinate with other airport stakeholders.** The UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operation is different from the typical manned operations at the airport. Consider outreach and other methods to make other aeronautical users to become aware of and anticipate this particular use on the airport.
- f. **Facilitate coordination with the local airport traffic control tower (if one is located at the airport) and the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator on operational requirements while the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) is in flight.**

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## 7. What topics could I consider for inclusion in a LOA?

Since the COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization) and the Section 333 grant of exemption outline the requirements for operating in the NAS (National Airspace System), the LOA (Letter of Agreement) does not need to consider these areas. You may want to focus the LOA (Letter of Agreement) on ground access and runway safety for the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operation and outline how the user will operate safely with other aeronautical users at the airport. Refer to airport-specific safety considerations listed in question number 10 above. You should also coordinate the terms of any LOA (Letter of Agreement) with your FAA Air Traffic Manager, if an Airport Traffic Control Tower is located at your airport.

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## 8. What additional approvals may be required for a UAS (unmanned aircraft system) to operate from an airport?

Depending on the operational requirements of the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) and the answers to the questions listed above in Question 5, the Airport may need additional FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) coordination. For example:

- a. If the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) user needs to install any support equipment on airport property (e.g., a communications tower), you must file a 7460-1, *Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration*, and obtain an Airspace Determination from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) prior to construction.
- b. If the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) user needs a separate landing and takeoff area that is not currently designated at the airport, you will need to update the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and submit FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) form 7480, *Notice for Construction, Alteration and Deactivation of Airports*, and obtain an Airport Space Determination from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) authorize this activity.
- c. If the proposed UAS (unmanned aircraft system) activity requires a change to the ALP (e.g., installation of support equipment, changes to land use, construction of buildings or aprons, etc.), you may need to obtain an environmental determination from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

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## 9. Can I prohibit a public UAS (unmanned aircraft system) Operator from operating from my airport?

You cannot prohibit a public UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator that has received a COA from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) that authorizes the public UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator to operate from your airport. As detailed above, a COA for a public UAS (unmanned aircraft system) Operator is location-specific. A public UAS (unmanned aircraft system) Operator who has not received a COA from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) is not authorized to operate in the NAS (National Airspace System) and is not authorized to operate from your airport.

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## 10. What rules must the operator of public UAS (unmanned aircraft system) or civilian UAS (unmanned aircraft system)

**10. What rules must the operator of public UAS (unmanned aircraft system) or civilian UAS (unmanned aircraft system) follow when operating from my airport?**

A UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator must comply with the rules outlined in 14 CFR part 91, except those rules from which Public Aircraft Operators are exempt. Additionally, the user must follow the rules and requirements of the user's specific COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization), if publicly-operated, or Section 333 grant of exemption and COA (Certificate of Waiver or Authorization), if civilian-operated.

The UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operator must also file a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) when the UAS (unmanned aircraft system) is in operation.

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**11. Should UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operators pay fees to use my airport?**

Yes. Transient UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operators (UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operators not based at the airport) are expected to pay fees and rates commensurate to other similarly situated transient users of the airport (e.g., landing fees, tie-down fees, fuel flowage fees, etc.). UAS (unmanned aircraft system) operators who seek to base the aircraft at the airport are subject to a fee and rental structure that is applicable to other similarly situated based aircraft tenants, including ground and/or hangar lease rates.

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**12. What should I do if I see a UAS (unmanned aircraft system) being operated in a manner that could interfere with manned aircraft flight or other uses (e.g., skydiving, etc.)?**

Airport operators have an important responsibility to keep the airport and the surrounding areas free from hazards that could impact the safe operation of the airport. Airport operators are also in a unique position to observe and identify activity near an airport that could impact the safety of the NAS (National Airspace System). Accordingly, if you observe a UAS (unmanned aircraft system) being operated in a manner that interferes with manned aircraft flight or other uses at your airport:

- Contact your local law enforcement agency to detect and immediately investigate and, as appropriate, pursue enforcement actions to stop the use. Refer to [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\) Guidance for Law Enforcement \(v/UAS/law enforcement\)](#).
- Notify the [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\)](#)'s 24 hour Regional Operations Center (ROC). Find [ROC contact information \(www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/headquarters\\_offices/ash/ash\\_offices/\)](#).
- To assist in the investigation of the event, the airport operator may wish to:
  - Keep good documentation of the time/location of the event.
  - Record activity, if possible.
  - Attempt to determine the type of activity.
  - Be vigilant in ascertaining the frequency and locations of activity.
  - If there is an [ATCT \(Airport Traffic Control Tower\)](#), coordinate with them to determine location/potential impact to the airport's operation.

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**13. Does the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) provide guidance on local and state regulation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS (unmanned aircraft system))?**

100, the [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\)](#) has a fact sheet on state and local regulation of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS (unmanned aircraft system)) that provides information for states and municipalities considering laws or regulations addressing UAS (unmanned aircraft system) use. The document outlines the [\(Federal Aviation Administration\)](#) safety rationale for federal oversight of aviation and airspace, and explains federal responsibility in this area.

The fact sheet provides examples of state and local laws affecting [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) for which consultation with the [FAA \(Federal Aviation Administration\)](#) is recommended, such as restrictions on flight altitude or flight paths, regulation of the navigable airspace, and mandating [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#)-specific equipment or training.

The fact sheet also gives examples of [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) laws likely to fall within state and local government authority, such as requirements for police to obtain a warrant prior to using [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) for surveillance; prohibitions on the use of [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) for voyeurism; exclusions on using [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#) for hunting or fishing, or harassing individuals engaged in those activities; and prohibitions on attaching firearms or other weapons to a [UAS \(unmanned aircraft system\)](#).

[UAS Fact Sheet \(www.faa.gov/UAS/regulations\\_policies/media/UAS\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_Final.pdf\)](http://www.faa.gov/UAS/regulations_policies/media/UAS_Fact_Sheet_Final.pdf) (PDF)

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#### 14. Who should I call if I have questions?

- Contact your local [Airports District Office \(ADO\)](#) ([www.faa.gov/airports/news\\_information/contact\\_info/](http://www.faa.gov/airports/news_information/contact_info/)).
- Contact your local [Flight Standards District Office \(FSDO\)](#) ([www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/field\\_offices/fsdo/](http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/field_offices/fsdo/)).

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## Related Information

- [Unmanned Aircraft Systems \(www.faa.gov/uas/\)](http://www.faa.gov/uas/)
- [FAQs \(Frequently Asked Questions\) about the Use of Model Aircraft Near an Airport \(www.faa.gov/airports/special\\_programs/uas\\_airports/model\\_airplane\\_faqs\)](http://www.faa.gov/airports/special_programs/uas_airports/model_airplane_faqs/)

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