

Why businesses that use drones are excited about today

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U. S. businesses can now legally operate drones.

A new rule goes into effect today that allows people to operate small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) for commercial purposes. It takes the form of the “ Part 107” amendment to the , which consists of laws regarding aeronautics, aviation and space exploration. The FAA and the Department of Transportation have jointly prepared a outlining the various stipulations.

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The UAS must:

- Weigh less than 55 pounds.
- Remain within the visual line of site of the remote pilot in command and the person manipulating the flight controls. (Alternatively, the UAS must remain within the visual line of sight of a second individual, a designated but unrequired “ visual observer” who is not piloting it. Only one remote pilot in command and one visual observer is allowed per UAS.)
- Remain close enough to the pilot and the person manipulating the flight controls for those people to see the aircraft with unaided vision (with the exception of corrective lenses).
- Not operate over any persons not directly participating in the operation.
- Not operate under a covered structure.
- Not operate inside a covered stationary vehicle.

- Operate only during daylight or “civil twilight” (30 minutes before official sunrise to 30 minutes after official sunset, local time) with appropriate anti-collision lighting.
- Must yield right of way to other aircraft.
- Not exceed a maximum ground speed of 100 mph (87 knots).
- Not exceed a maximum altitude of 400 feet above ground level unless within 400 feet of a structure.
- Operate in a minimum weather visibility of three miles from control station.
- Not operate from a moving aircraft.
- Not operate from a moving vehicle unless the operation is over a sparsely populated area.
- Not carry hazardous materials.
- Undergo preflight inspection by the remote pilot in command.
- Not be operated by a person who knows or has a reason to know that he or she has a physical or mental condition that would interfere with safe operation.

Other info:

- Foreign-registered small UAS are allowed to operate under Part 107 if they satisfy .
- The flight must occur wholly within the bounds of a state and may not involve transport between Hawaii and another place in Hawaii through airspace outside Hawaii; the District of Columbia and another place in the District of Columbia; or a territory or possession of the United States and another place in the same territory or possession.

- Most of the restrictions discussed above are waivable if the applicant demonstrates that his or her operation can safely be conducted under the terms of a certificate of waiver.

Those piloting small UAS must meet a list of requirements as well, from remote pilot airman certification (with a small UAS rating) to vetting by the TSA. In addition, all UAS must be registered with the FAA.

Previously, commercial operation was illegal unless a business qualified for an exemption, which was a lengthy and expensive process.

Industry research predicts that the global commercial drone market is expected to grow to \$20.6 billion over the next five years, according to . Cell tower and wind turbine maintenance, roof inspections and surveying are some of the fields that will benefit greatly today's changes.

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Drone groups have commended the government for finalizing the rule so quickly. In February 2015, the Government Accountability Office estimated a two- to three-year wait, according to . A year and a half later, the FAA has delivered on getting it through " as expeditiously as possible."