

INTRODUCTION

A drone is sometimes called an unmanned aircraft system or UAS. And as most people are aware, it's a flying device of varying sizes that doesn't require an onboard pilot.

Drones can carry out an impressive range of tasks such as military operations, surveying land, and someday, even delivering packages to your front door.

To fly a drone, you must pass a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) test and be certified.

When operating a drone, the following FAA regulations must be followed:

- the maximum height is 400 feet;
- the maximum speed is 100 mph;
- the minimum weather visibility is three miles from the control station;
- drones may be flown 30 minutes before sunrise and 30 minutes after sunset;
- and you cannot be a pilot or observer for more than one drone at a time.

All drones weighing more than 55 pounds, whether for recreational or commercial use, must be registered with the FAA.

Recreational drone use is limited to leisure and sport activities such as photography for private use and drone races.

Recreational users are also asked to follow the FAA's basic guidelines for flight safety, including:

- operating the drone in accordance with any community-based safety guidelines;
- obtaining authorization before flying in a controlled airspace;
- and not flying over moving vehicles or people.

Commercial drone use includes business or other for-profit activities.

Commercial users must comply with the [FAA's Part 107 regulations](#).

Unless waived by the FAA, the following limitations apply for commercial operators:

- must be at least 16 years of age;
- must obtain remote pilot certification by passing an aeronautical knowledge test;
- must always keep the drone within eyesight;
- and must comply with no drone zone locations.





State and local drone laws apply in addition to federal regulations.

In Pennsylvania:

- it is illegal to fly a drone to survey someone's private spaces, or to operate a drone in a way that puts people at risk of harm
- drone usage is permitted in state parks;
- and local municipalities are permitted to regulate drones as needed, although state law supersedes any local regulations.

BENEFITS

- Helps to get imagery of unsafe and inaccessible areas;
- Collect large amounts of data in a short period of time;
- A cost-effective municipal tool for land development and zoning enforcement.

DRAWBACKS

- Drones and their accessories can be expensive;
- Can lead to legal challenges if the drone pilot does not follow FAA or state regulations;
- Potential for invasion of privacy.

RESOURCES

- [FAA General Info on Drones](#)
- [FAA Drone Regulations](#)

- [Pennsylvania Drone Regulations](#)
- [PennDOT Drone Info](#)

RELATED FACT SHEET ON PLANNINGTOOLKIT.ORG

- Personal Delivery Devices

TIP TO CONSIDER

- CONSULT FAA, STATE AND LOCAL REGULATIONS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE BEFORE FLYING.



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