

UAS FAQ'S FOR WSDOT EMPLOYEES

1. What is a UAS?

UAS stands for Unmanned Aircraft Systems, sometimes referred to as “drones.” Per Title 14 CFR, Part 1 (Definitions) the definition of an aircraft is: “...a device that is used or intended to be used for flight in the air.” A UAS is an unmanned aircraft (Merriam-Webster.com).

2. May I fly my personal UAS for WSDOT business?

No. WSDOT’s interim UAS policy requires all WSDOT employees to use contracted, professional UAS operators.

3. Can I hire a consultant to fly a UAS for state business?

Yes. The WSDOT interim UAS policy requires the use of contracted, professional UAS operators for all WSDOT projects and any other UAS applications. To receive a contract, WSDOT employees must meet the following requirements:

- a. Follow WSDOT’s contracting rules found in [WSDOT Purchasing Manual M 72-80.24](#).
- b. Adhere to existing FAA and Washington State rules.
*The Aviation Division is available to provide technical assistance. It is recommended that 20 days prior to the consultation, the region, mode or office submit a pre-activity safety plan and work plan for review.

4. Can WSDOT offices procure a UAS?

The WSDOT interim policy requires the Deputy Secretary’s approval prior to procuring a UAS.

5. What does my consultant need in order to fly as a commercial operator for the government?

All commercial UAS operators must accomplish the following prior to all UAS flights:

- a. Possess a valid Airworthiness Certificate for their UAS **or** obtain an FAA Section 333 Exemption (FAA Policy N JO 7210.891 and www.faa.gov/uas).
- b. Possess an approved Certificate of Waiver or Approval (COA) from the FAA (FAA Policy N JO 7210.891 and www.faa.gov/uas).
- c. File a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) either electronically or through the Seattle Flight Specialist Service area (FAA Order 7930.2k).

6. What is a COA?

For public aircraft operations, the FAA issues a [Certificate of Waiver or Authorization \(COA\)](#) that permits public agencies and organizations to operate a particular aircraft, for a particular purpose, in a particular area. The COA allows an operator to use a defined block of airspace and includes special safety provisions unique to the proposed operation. COAs usually are issued for a specific period – up to two years in many cases (www.faa.gov/uas/public_operations/).

7. What is a Section 333 Exemption?

By law, any aircraft operating in the national airspace requires a certificated and registered aircraft, a licensed pilot, and operational approval. [Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 \(FMRA\)](#) (PDF) grants the Secretary of Transportation the authority to determine whether an airworthiness certificate is required for a UAS to operate safely in the National Airspace System (NAS).

Presently this authority is being leveraged by the FAA to grant case-by-case authorization for certain unmanned aircraft to perform commercial operations prior to the final Small UAS Rule. The Small UAS Rule will become the primary method for authorizing small UAS operations once it is complete (estimated June 2016).

8. Under what authority is WSDOT operating UAS?

WSDOT employees follow three specific guidelines:

- a. The WSDOT UAS policy.
- b. FAA laws and regulations (Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)).
- c. WSDOT policies and procedures found online at:
<http://wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/Publications/Manuals/>

9. What are potential uses of UAS by WSDOT offices?

Common uses for a UAS are:

- a. Fish passage inspections and aerial imagery
- b. Aerial imagery of projects with accessibility challenges
- c. Bridge or other structural inspections
- d. Geotechnical field investigations involving landslides, rock fall and other steep terrain
- e. Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) applications
- f. Aerial imagery and surface models
- g. Vegetation and soil investigations

- h. Roadside, roadway and pump station inspections
- i. Traffic monitoring and collecting traffic data
Disaster response

10. Do I need a pre-activity safety plan for UAS operations?

Yes. All operations should follow the WSDOT core safety values as outlined in [WSDOT Safety Procedures and Guidelines Manual M 75-01](#) and *Safe From the Start* found at: <http://wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/Employee/Safety/News/2014/09/WSDOTSafetyStrategy.htm>.

The primary and most important goal is working towards the elimination of workplace accidents that result in personal injury so that all employees go home safely at the end of each workday.

11. How should I handle privacy concerns?

Maintaining the public's privacy is a priority for WSDOT. Each employee should take the time to conduct a thorough review of their flight with their contractor prior to the operation, and verify that all privacy assurances listed in the contract are met and understood. If there is a question regarding public privacy, the employee should notify their supervisor for clarification or refer to the [Enterprise Risk Management Manual M 72-01](#).

12. Who is the WSDOT point of contact for UAS operations?

The WSDOT Point of Contact for UAS operations is:

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