

Drones – Q&A

The use of drones is becoming more and more prevalent in Ireland and people who intend to operate drones should be aware of their responsibilities to ensure that they do so safely.

This Q&A information has been developed by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) to provide users with information regarding the use of drones in Ireland.

1. What is a Drone?

A drone is an unmanned aircraft / remotely piloted aircraft.

2. Is there a difference between a drone and a model aircraft?

Model aircraft and drones are both considered small unmanned aircraft and the same rules apply to their operation. These rules are contained within in the Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) and Rockets Order, 2015 (SI 563 of 2015).

3. What aviation regulations govern the use of drones?

The Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) and Rockets Order, 2015 (SI 563 of 2015) regulates the use of drones in Ireland. There are also Aeronautical Notices, Directions and Instructions that apply to the use of drones.

4. What is prohibited regarding the operation of drones?

The Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) and Rockets Order, 2015 (SI 563 of 2015) contains a number of limitations for the operation of drones. These include never operating a drone:

- if it will be a hazard to another aircraft in flight
- over an assembly of people - 12 persons or more
- farther than 300m from the person operating the drone
- within 30m of any person, vessel or structure not under the control of the person operating the drone
- closer than 5km from an aerodrome
- in a negligent or reckless manner so as to endanger life or property of others
- over 400ft (120m) above ground level
- over urban areas
- in civil or military controlled airspace
- in restricted areas (e.g. military installations, prisons, etc.)
- unless the person operating the drone has permission from the landowner for take-off and landing.



Please see the Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) and Rockets Order, 2015 (SI 563 of 2015) for more detailed information.

5. Do I need a permission from the IAA to fly a drone? If so, what do I need?

No, provided you adhere to the limits prescribed within the Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) and Rockets Order, 2015 SI 563 of 2015. (Please see question 4 above for the list of limits).

6. What if I want to fly my drone outside the limits prescribed in the regulations?

If you wish to fly your drone outside the limits prescribed in the regulations you must apply for a Specific Operating Permission (SOP) from the IAA following training with one of the approved IAA Registered Training Facilities (RTF). Please see www.iaa.ie/rtf for a list of training facilities.

7. How do I apply for a Specific Operating Permission to fly my drone?

In order to get a Specific Operating Permission, you must first attend a drone safety training course and produce an operations manual that is acceptable to the IAA. Please see Aeronautical Notice U.02 for more detailed information. To apply, go to www.iaa.ie/dronesapplicationforms

8. Do I need insurance to operate my drone?

The IAA recommends that everybody who operates a drone has insurance.

9. Do I need a permission to fly a drone with an inbuilt or mounted camera?

Irrespective of whether your drone has an inbuilt or mounted camera or not, the same conditions apply. See Data Protection Commissioner website www.dataprotection.ie

10. Do the same regulations apply if I fly my drone over private property?

The regulations apply EVERYWHERE in Irish airspace. Be advised that there may be privacy or trespass laws or other legal issues that should be taken into consideration by the person operating the drone. These rules are not within the remit of the IAA.

11. Do I need to register my drone with the IAA?

All drones over 1kg must be registered with the IAA. This includes the weight of the battery and all attached equipment. You can register your drone via the IAA website at www.iaa.ie/drones

12. Do I need a qualification to operate a drone

If you operate within the limits set in the Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) and Rockets Order, 2015 (SI 563 of 2015), no qualification is required. However, to operate under Specific Operating Permission, a Pilot Competency Certificate is required. www.iaa.ie/dronesapplicationforms

13. Where can I get more information on the regulations and how to safely operate a drone?

Please see the Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) and Rockets Order, 2015 (SI 563 of 2015) and associated Aeronautical Notices. For further information, visit www.iaa.ie/drones

14. Do I need to register my model aircraft?

Yes. Model aircraft are treated in the same way as drones. All model aircraft over 1kg must be registered with the IAA. For more, visit the Model Aeronautics Council of Ireland at www.maci.ie

15. How do I register my drone?

You can register your drone via the IAA website at www.iaa.ie/drones. This is a two step process. In order to register your drone, you must first register with ASSET, the IAA's online terrain mapping system. Once done, you will be able to register your drone with the IAA via the ASSET system.

16. Where can I not fly my drone?

There are a number of airspace restrictions, in which you must never fly your drone. Please see question 18.

17. How can I tell if an aerodrome is nearby?

It is the responsibility of the person operating a drone to assess the area in which they intend to fly. While the IAA's ASSET tool can be used to establish the location of licensed aerodromes within the State, it is essential for the person who will operate the drone to visually inspect the area in which they intend to operate for aircraft activity.

18. How can I tell where controlled or restricted airspace is?

The IAA's Asset tool can be used to determine controlled and restricted airspace areas. Please note that the boundaries of restricted airspace may change and that Temporary Restricted Airspace areas may be created. It is essential to get up to date information on controlled and restricted airspace via ASSET every time you wish to fly.

19. Is there a minimum age for operating a drone?

While there is no minimum age for operating a drone in aviation regulation, the IAA advises that age guidelines indicated by drone manufacturers are followed. You must be over 16 to register your drone, if it is over 1kg. A parent or guardian may register the drone for those under 16. Please note that other laws may apply.

20. I want to use my drone for commercial activities. Do I need permission from the IAA?

You do not need permission from the IAA to use drones commercially. However, if you wish to fly your drone outside the limits prescribed in the regulations you must apply for a Specific Operating Permission from the IAA.

21. Up to what distance and height can I operate my drone?

You must not operate your drone beyond 300m and 400ft (120m) above ground level in uncontrolled airspace, and 300m and 50ft (15m) in controlled airspace.