



Interagency Aviation SAFETY ALERT



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Subject: UAS Intrusions Impacting Incident Air Operations

Area of Concern: Aviation Safety

Distribution: All Aviation Operations

Discussion: Last year, [Interagency Safety Alert 14-03](#) highlighted emerging UAS hazards that pose significant potential to interfere with our mission. Commercial and recreational UAS operations have increased dramatically and this trend is expected to continue. This year, unauthorized UAS intrusions have already adversely affected incident flight operations. The increasing emergence of these threats makes it imperative that incident personnel anticipate these encounters and establish procedures to manage UAS intrusions.

FAA Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) prohibit non-participating aircraft from entering a TFR. Unlike incident aircraft pilots, most civil UAS operators are completely unaware of the requirements for operating within or near an incident. Incident personnel should expect and plan for these types of encounters by establishing a process to manage them. Established procedures provide the greatest capability to expeditiously mitigate this threat as much as possible.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

- **Educate the public in the affected area:**
 - Forest/Unit Aviation Officers and/or Public Information Officers (PIOs) should reach out to local hobby stores/groups and the media to request their assistance in providing information on these types of issues and how the public can help.
- **Identify** the intrusion.
- **Communicate** the intrusion to aerial supervision, incoming/on-scene aircraft, ground personnel and dispatch. Be sure to follow-up with documenting it via <https://www.safecom.gov>.
- **Assess** the potential for a mid-air collision and the impact of the intrusion to incident operations.



- **Mitigate** the risk- consider the following:
 - Suspend air operations if the situation warrants.
 - Divert aircraft to alternate areas on the incident or another incident.
 - Hold aircraft at an alternate location and altitude.
 - Brief ground crews on any modification to air operations.
 - Request a TFR if one is not already in place.

- **Investigate** the intrusion.
 - Try to safely establish and maintain visual contact with the drone or the person operating it.
 - Coordinate with the FAA and local law enforcement to establish contact with the drone operator. See link below for FAA guidance to law enforcement:
https://www.faa.gov/uas/regulations_policies/media/FAA_UAS-PO_LEA_Guidance.pdf

- **Report.**
 - Incident personnel should file a [SAFECOM](#) and any other unusual occurrence reports required by their respective organizations. Be sure to clearly identify your mitigation to share the lessons learned and provide trending/tracking information.
 - Report the occurrence to the FAA at: http://www.faa.gov/contact/safety_hotline/

Incident operations personnel make risk-based decisions on every mission. The decision to conduct any mission depends on the assessment of a variety of risk factors including (but not limited to) wind, topography, and visibility. Mitigating risks associated with a UAS intrusion is no different. Every tactical situation is unique and respective plans/procedures may require modification based on those differences. Your number one defense is to be proactive and educate the public on what they don't know. Complimentary to that is establishing procedures designed to manage it when it occurs. Implementing a TFR restricts non-participating aircraft and improves safety for flight crews and other incident personnel.

Plan, Educate, Communicate, Report

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