



AVIATION SAFETY EXPERTS URGE CAUTION WITH A POPULAR CHRISTMAS GIFT

News / Airlines



Drones are tipped to be one of the most popular presents this Christmas but fledgling pilots have been delivered a stern warning about the potential dangers for new flyers.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) is urging people to stick to a handful of basic rules in the wake of a high-profile incident where a pro-skier narrowly avoided having a drone fall out of the sky on his head.

Peter Gibson from CASA said there were many hidden dangers associated with the devices.

"If drone becomes out of control and you hit a person you can obviously cause injuries," he said.

"If your drone collides with an aircraft it could cause a catastrophic accident.

"That's why we have safety regulations with penalties attached to them."

He said drones were good fun and people should not feel as though they could not have fun with them, but a few simple rules apply.

"Keeping well away from people, well away from aircraft and making sure you've got your drone in your sight at all times," he said.

The rules are contained in the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations and breaking them can attract hefty fines.

"The Civil Aviation Safety Authority can issue fines of up to \$9,000 in serious cases," Mr Gibson said.

He said the authority does investigate drone use and there have been substantial fines laid in the past.

"The most serious one in Australia was where a drone hit a woman who was participating in a marathon race in the back of the head and cut her head," he said.

"That was a drone which was being flown too close to people and the operator lost control of the drone.

"More recently in the United Kingdom a small child actually lost an eye because a drone collided with his face."

Tom Waugh is a cinematographer who works with drones.

He said flying a drone is very different to operating a remote control car.

"Because it operates in another axis which is up and down, not just along the ground," he said.

"In terms of safety there are propellers as well which can do more damage to people."

He said even micro-drones can be dangerous to people, especially when flown inside.

"While they are simple to use once you get a handle on them, initially you can put the throttle in too much and send it into the ceiling," he said.

"You can see on YouTube a huge compilation of people smashing their drones on their first flight.

"Launching bigger drones inside because they think its good to fly it inside the first time, straight into the ceiling fan, there's \$3,000 damage."

Mr Waugh also warned against drinking and droning.

"Never a good mix," he said.

"It is a vehicle and you are operating it so don't do it intoxicated.

"Just remember it is a weapon in disguise."

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