



FAA TO REQUIRE SMALL UAV REGISTRATION STARTING DEC. 21

News / Airlines



A small unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) registration website administered by FAA will go live Dec. 21 and all small UAV owners in the US will **be required** to register their devices.

US transportation secretary Anthony Foxx unveiled the requirement in a Dec. 14 conference call with media, saying the registration process would be “simple and easy.” UAVs weighing between .55 lbs. and 55 lbs. will have to be registered, which follows the recommendations of the Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Registration Task Force created by FAA in October.

Foxx said those who bought small UAVs prior to Dec. 21 will have until Feb. 19 to register while those purchasing UAVs on or after Dec. 21 will have to register before the device’s first flight.

Those registering must be at least 13 years old and will have to provide their name, physical address and an email address to FAA, which will also require a credit card transaction. A \$5 registration fee will be put in place 30 days after the website goes live, but those registering in the first 30 days will still need a valid credit card—FAA will refund the \$5 fee to the card during that time period.

Registrants will receive a certificate containing a number that must be clearly marked on the UAV. A registrant can use the same number for multiple vehicles. Children under age 13 can operate UAVs, but their parents must register and are expected to supervise their child's operation of the device. Small UAV operators are expected to have their registration certificate, either in paper or electronic form, with them when operating the device.

FAA deputy administrator Michael Whitaker said the registration requirement is a “key step in the process” of educating small UAV users. “Education is a major focus of this,” he told reporters, saying UAV incidents so far have been “largely due to people not knowing the rules.” He said registrants will be informed they must fly their UAVs below 400 feet altitude, keep the devices in sight at all times, never fly over groups of people or stadiums and seek permission from control towers to fly within five miles of an airport.

The onus to register will be on the purchaser of the UAV. At a later date, a point-of-purchase registration may become possible, but initially the FAA-administered website will be the only place to register. FAA said the website is still in testing, so the agency has not released it. The website will be accessible via www.faa.gov. Whitaker noted that FAA followed the “vast majority” of the UAS task force’s recommendations in developing the registration requirement.

“As far as enforcement, we have a broad spectrum of options available to us,” Whitaker said, but he emphasized that compliance with the registration requirement and education is FAA’s focus, not taking punitive action. “For blatant violations, we do have both civil and criminal enforcement actions available to us,” he said.

These include a \$27,500 maximum civil fine and a maximum of three years in prison “in an egregious situation,” according to Whitaker.

Foxx said the registration system is “not the only step government is taking or will take in the future” regarding small UAVs, adding, “We reserve the right to ratchet up or down” the registration rule. “Unmanned aircraft operators are aviators and with that title comes a great deal of responsibility,” Foxx said.

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