

Guidelines for Operation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Other Airborne Objects on Campus

The California Institute of Technology conducts research to advance technology and in support of education. In carrying out its educational, research and business activities, students, staff, faculty, and others may wish to make use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems and other airborne objects that are regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). These Guidelines are intended to ensure that all use of unmanned aircraft systems and other airborne objects on campus is conducted safely and in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

Definitions:

Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) means an unmanned aircraft and all of the associated support equipment, control station, data links, telemetry, communications and navigation equipment, etc., necessary to operate the unmanned aircraft, which fall under the regulatory authority of the FAA. UAS may have a variety of names including but not limited to drones, quadcopters, and quadrotors.

Other Airborne Objects (OAO) means moored balloons, kites, amateur rockets, and unmanned free balloons under the regulatory authority of the FAA.

UAS and OAO Used for Educational, Research, or Business-Related Purposes

Anyone desiring to operate an UAS or OAO on Caltech property for educational, research, or other business-related purposes must adhere to the following procedure:

1. For outdoor use of UAS, comply with all applicable FAA rules and regulations. This includes pilot requirements, aircraft requirements, location requirements, and operating rules. See https://www.faa.gov/uas/getting_started/ (see “Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Frequently Asked Questions “Flying for Work or Business”). For help interpreting FAA requirements, please contact the [Office of General Counsel](#).
2. For all outdoor use of UAS or OAO, submit a [Campus Application \(PDF\)](#) to Security, attaching the FAA registration and exemption, if applicable.
3. Once approved, Security will forward copies to the operator, Environment, Health & Safety, Security Field Supervisors, and other offices as necessary, depending on where and when the UAS will be flown.
4. Indoor use of UAS and OAO are not regulated by the FAA, and do not require a Campus Application, if they are only flown in the lab in which the operator works. However, if UAS or OAO will intrude into areas outside of the lab, such as hallways or other common areas, a Campus Application must be submitted.

Prohibition against Hobby or Recreational Use of FAA-Registered UAS

UAS that weigh more than 55 pounds including payload at takeoff must be registered with the FAA. Any UAS that requires registration may not be flown for hobby or recreational purposes on campus.

Use of Children’s Toy Aircraft

Some toy drones that are marketed for use by children weigh less than 55 pounds including payload, at takeoff (usually the packaging will provide weight information). These may be flown on the North Athletic Field, if approved in advance by a Director of the Athletic Department.

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Questions and Compliance

All questions regarding use of UAS or OAO on campus should be directed to the Chief of Security at x4701 or (626) 395-4701.

Non-compliance: Any use of UAS or OAO not in compliance with these Guidelines may subject the user to disciplinary measures and/or being prohibited from using UAS or OAO on campus in the future.