



## Notice to Media Organisations and Third Party RPAS Operators - RPAS Flights in the Vicinity of RFS Work

### Technical

## Scope

This Operational Guideline describes how media organisations may be authorised to use third party Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) operators in the vicinity of NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) work or operations.

In particular, it addresses the provisions of [Civil Aviation Safety Regulation \(CASR\) 101.238\(e\)](#), and describes the conditions under which an approval to fly may be granted.

RFS Brigades and Brigade members are not currently authorised to operate RPAS while on duty with the RFS.

## Guiding Principles

- At times, the RFS may permit media organisations to capture still images or video through the use of a media organisation owned RPAS.
- The RFS will only authorise flights by holders of a Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operator's Certificate (ReOC). A Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) Accreditation is not sufficient.

### RFS Brigades do not Operate RPAS

- It is an express condition of the 101.238(e) approval that media organisations must follow the Request/Approval process before agreeing to requests from brigades to fly.

### When can a Media RPAS be used?

- The need for a mission may arise:
  - as part of news gathering around a fire or other incident; or
  - as part of news gathering around a planned event, such as a Prescribed Burn ("hazard reduction"), Field Day, exhibition, conference, media event etc.; or
  - when safe work practices indicate the use of an RPAS rather than a person on the ground (reporter, camera person), or a crewed aircraft.
- The District Duty Officer (DDO) in consultation with the Incident Controller (IC) may support or decline a request for a flight.

### Authority to Approve, Refuse, or Discontinue Flights

#### ➤ General Provisions

- The single point of contact for a media organisation is the State Duty Media Officer (SDMO).
- RPAS are aircraft, fitted with cameras; RPAS are not themselves camera equipment.
- RPAS operations in the context of RFS work are managed in all respects by the RFS State Air Desk (SAD), alongside conventionally piloted aircraft.

#### ➤ Request/Approval Process

- A media organisation may make a request for flight to the SDMO. The SDMO will communicate the request to the State Duty Aviation Officer (SDAO), who may or may not approve the flight. All requests for RPAS flights are approved or declined by the SDAO. The SDAO manages the SAD.
- For the purposes of CASR 101.238(e), the sole "person in charge of the operation", and therefore the sole consenting authority, is the SDAO.



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- There is no provision for obtaining approval to fly from local RFS personnel, locally or via any other means.
- Approval is not presumed, is not immediate, is not automatic, and may be conditional.
- The State Duty Operations Officer (SDOO) will determine the size, extent, and nature of the area “where a fire, police or other public safety or emergency operation is being conducted”.
- Fire Control Officers, DDOs, District staff, Group and Brigade Officers may only approve media RPAS requests at the vicinity in which they are operating, in consultation with the SAD.

### Flight Request may be Declined

- A request for a flight may be refused.
- Grounds for refusal include, but are not limited to:
  - there are (or will be, or may be) other aircraft (of any type) operating in the proposed area; or
  - there are already other requests for RPAS flights or other media related being considered for similar times or places; or
  - the operation poses, or may pose, a risk to operational activities (whether in the air or on the ground), other aircraft, persons, or property; or
  - the operation may impact adversely on other RFS activities; or
  - for any technical or operational aviation reason (including weather); or
  - for any aviation regulatory reason; or
  - for non-compliance with a term of this Operational Procedure and Guideline (OPG).

### Separation Procedures for Aircraft to Aircraft and Aircraft to RPAS

#### ➤ One Aircraft, One Flight at a Time Rule

- In a place where an RPAS operation is proposed, media work will not impede firefighting operations. Firefighting operations will always take priority.
- The onus is on the media organisation to be aware of any Notice(s) to Airmen (NOTAMs) and other regulatory matters.
- Media RPAS are subject to the control and direction of the SAD, the IMT, or any RFS field officer in whose vicinity they are operating.

#### ➤ RFS Approach to Compliance

- ReOC holders acting for media organisations are expected to comply with requirements and meet their own obligations.
- The RFS will, so far as practical, act to enable and facilitate an operator’s CASA requirements and compliance.
- Precedence of Crewed Aircraft
  - Where through emergent circumstances, there are an RPAS and a conventionally piloted aircraft operating close to each other, then the RPAS will always land as soon as practicable. Where necessary, this will include forcibly landing/crashing the RPAS.
  - The safety of a crewed aircraft will always prevail over that of an RPAS.



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#### ➤ Flying Over Ground-Based RFS Assets

##### ➤ General provisions

- The CASA "30 Metre Rule" applies in all circumstances.
- No RFS member, is a body capable of consenting to a 15-30m distance.

##### ➤ Operations around and above RFS vehicles

- Media RPAS must not operate from or in the vicinity of an RFS vehicle.

## Special Considerations

### Terminology

#### ➤ Media organisation

In this document, a "media organisation" means:

- an entity that is engaged in news gathering, journalism, reporting, or documentary making (in any media), and/or any of their servants or agents or employees or crew; or
- an individual media worker who holds an accreditation from the RFS to work in the vicinity of RFS operations; or
- a stringer, but not a private freelancer; or
- a person or business providing RPAS services to such a body; and/or
- a person or body that the RFS elects to recognise as a media worker or media organisation.

#### ➤ Media RPAS

In this document, a "media RPAS" means:

- an RPAS operated by a media organisation under its own ReoC; or
- the holder of a ReOC, acting on behalf of a media organisation.

## Related Information

[Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System](#)

[Civil Aviation Safety Regulation 101.238\(e\)](#)

NSW [Rural Fires Act \(1997\)](#)

[OMP - State Duty Operations Officer](#)

[OMP - State Duty Aviation Officer](#)

[OMP - State Duty Media Officer](#)



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## Definitions

<b>CASA</b>	Civil Aviation Safety Authority - The government body that regulates Australian aviation safety.
<b>CASR</b>	Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998 - Provide regulatory controls for civil aviation safety in Australia. They contain the detailed the safety standards that people and organisations must comply with.
<b>DDO</b>	District Duty Officer - Is the rostered officer responsible for maintaining an oversight of incident activity in the designated area.
<b>IC</b>	Incident Controller - The individual responsible for the management of all incident control activities across a whole incident.
<b>NOTAM</b>	Notice to Airmen - Is a notice filed with an aviation authority to alert aircraft pilots of potential hazards along a flight route or at a location that could affect the safety of the flight.
<b>OPG</b>	Operational Procedure and Guideline.
<b>ReOC</b>	Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operator's Certificate - Allows the individual or business to trade as a drone service provider.
<b>RPAS</b>	Remotely Piloted Aircraft System - An aircraft without any persons aboard which is piloted from a remote pilot station (also referred to as a drone).
<b>SAD</b>	State Air Desk - A centralised location where aircraft for NSW agencies are dispatched or tasked.
<b>SDAO</b>	State Duty Aviation Officer - Responsible for maintaining a 24/7 point of contact for the provision of aviation assistance to Districts and other Agencies. They provide regular advice and briefings to the State Duty Operations Officer and/or the State Operations Controller.
<b>SDMO</b>	State Duty Media Officer - Is responsible for providing 24-hour assistance to members of the RFS and the media on any issue involving the RFS.
<b>SDOO</b>	State Duty Operations Officer - The SDOO is the Officer responsible for maintaining a State-wide oversight of incident activity, providing advice and support to Districts and providing advice and briefings to the State Operations Controller and the Deputy Commissioner Field Operations and Commissioner.