

(RPAS) Remote Piloted Aircraft Operations 2.2.29

The ACT Rural Fire Service Chief Officer has issued this SOP under Section 38(1) of the *Emergencies Act 2004* – A Chief Officer may determine standards and protocols.

Purpose

The purpose of this Service Standard is to detail the procedures for the operation of Remote Piloted Aircraft (RPA) or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) often referred to as drones in support of emergency operations to ensure safety in aircraft operations at incidents and during other ACT Emergency Services Agency's activities.

Scope

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is applicable to personnel engaged in fire and other emergency operations within the ACT, which includes all personnel from;

- ACT Rural Fire Service (RFS)
- ACT Fire & Rescue Service (ACTF&R)
- ACT State Emergency Service (SES)
- ACT Ambulance Service (ACTAS)
- ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS)

Background

Remotely Piloted Aircraft

Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) commonly known as drones has reached a point where they present a viable option for gathering intelligence over emergency operations in the ACT.

There are inherent risks however in the use of Remote Piloted Aircraft. RPA can pose a safety concern, especially in the context of aerial operations, where the potential airspace incursion by unmanned aircraft into ACT ESA emergency operations is very high. RPA also pose problems in terms of safety of other airspace users and persons on the ground.

Civil Aviation Safety Regulation (CASR) Part 101 – Unmanned Aircraft and Rockets is the guiding instrument for the operation of remote piloted aircraft in Australia. Specifically, CASR 101.055 (1) “A person must not operate an unmanned aircraft in a way that creates a hazard to another aircraft, another person, or property.”

ACT ESA views any RPA operation conducted for ACT ESA by third party operators as being “for the purpose other than sport or recreation” as defined by CASR 101.235. As such, all RPA operations conducted for ACT ESA will fall under CASR 1998 Part 101 Sub Part F.

Only ACT ESA RPA Pilots approved by the ACT ESA RPA Chief Pilot listed in the ACT ESA ReOC (Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operators Certificate), AFP Specialist Protective Command RPA Pilots and NAFC “CWN” Call When Needed RPA Pilots engaged by ACT ESA are permitted to operate RPA and UAV’s in support of ACT ESA Emergency Operations.

Responsibilities

ESA RPA Chief Pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assesses and prioritises requests for the use of RPA/UAV. Assigns ESA (RPA) Remote Piloted Aircraft pilot(s) to the incident or event.
ACT RFS Aviation Officer / Duty Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approves / rejects RPA/UAV use to ensure deconfliction with aerial firefighting aircraft. Advises ACT ESA Contracted Aircraft of the location date time of ACT ESA RPA/UAV use.
Respective ESA Agency Chief Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assesses requests for non-incident use of RPA/UAV at events involving their agency.
ESA RPA Pilot(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that ACT ESA RPA/UAV Operations comply with all ACT ESA Policies & Procedures and that the CASA Drone Safety Rules are followed.

Applicability of this SOP

This SOP applies to the use of all Remote Piloted Aircraft (RAP) and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) at ACT Emergency Operations and Non-Emergency Operations (Events) within the ACT.

Safety

RPA Operations must not be conducted over an area where a fire, flood, police or other public safety or emergency operation is being conducted without the approval of the Incident Controller (IC), ACT RFS Aviation Officer and ACT ESA RPA Chief Pilot.

If any ACT ESA Member notices someone operating a RPA over and or near an ACT ESA Emergency Incident, Operation or event, they must direct that person to cease and desist and refer the matter immediately to their OIC and the ESA Communications Centre.

RPA/UAV Requests and Approvals

1. All requests for RPA / UAV use within the ESA requires assessment by the ACT ESA RPA Chief Pilot and ACT RFS Aviation Officer and approval by the IC / OIC for Emergency Operations and respective agency Chief Officer for Non Emergency Operations (Events).
2. The ESA Chief Pilot will determine priorities for allocation of RPA as described.
3. The RFS Aviation Officer or RFS Duty Officer must supply approval for the use of RPA.
4. Upon authorisation, the requesting officer will be given a time and location to meet the pilot and will be given instructions to ensure appropriate safety briefings are provided for all persons.

Additional agency involvement


This SOP applies to the use of ESA Remote Piloted Aircraft and contracted and call when needed (CWN) RPA within the ACT.

Document information

Version history

Author	Version	Version Approval Date	Summary of Changes
Simon May	1.0	06/6/2022	

Approved by

Name	Title/Role	Signature	Date
Rohan Scott	CO ACT RFS		08/02/2024

Document Owner

Position	Section
RFS Director	Operations

Next review due: 01/02/2027

Related documents

Document name	Version
NSW and ACT Aviation Standard Operating Procedures 2018	
AFAC Unauthorised of Illegal Use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft at or near Emergencies	
Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) Drone safety rules	