

ALERTS

Aviation Law Alert - Recreational Drone Sales Lead To Mandatory Registration System

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The recent surge in recreational drone sales coupled with an increase in potential dangers to general aviation traffic have prompted the Federal Aviation Authority to consider a national centralized system for drone registration. Issues have ranged from drones interfering with airborne aircraft to complicating efforts to fight fires.

On October 19, federal aviation regulators announced a mandatory system to register and track recreational drones purchased by a growing group of hobbyists. Those hobbyists are on track to buy approximately 700,000 drones by the end of this year, which equates to a 63 percent increase over last year's sales.

The details for the registration system have not been ironed out, but are expected to be issued by November 20, so that the registry can be up and running before the upcoming holiday shopping season, a time when countless drones are likely to be purchased. The registration process may include recordation of the specific drone and purchaser's identity at the time of sale. It may also include online registration and electronic confirmation that the purchaser is familiar with the general rules for operating drones in the United States. A task force composed of approximately 25 government officials and industry leaders will convene to hammer out the proposed rules.

Regulators believe the national drone registration will assist government and law enforcement officials in identifying culprits of drone-related incidents. They also believe it will lead to a higher level of accountability by hobbyists before they send their drones into potentially dangerous situations. U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Fox said "registering unmanned aircraft will help build a culture of accountability and responsibility, especially with new users who have no experience operating in the U.S. aviation system." Fox also said the system "will help protect public safety in the air and on the ground."

It is important to note that the mandatory registration regime will likely not only apply to new drones, but will also cover those who have purchased drones in recent years. It is likely there will be penalties imposed on those hobbyists who fail to comply. Further information on the task force that will be issuing the recommendations for mandatory drone registration can be found [here](#).

Aside from the mandatory drone registration system, government and law enforcement will also have access to new tools designed to disable drones in the sky. A company known as Battle Innovations has introduced the DroneDefender, which enables law enforcement to disable drones using radio pulses to disrupt a drone's communications system. The

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company plans to start selling the DroneDefender in 2016.

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