

Going Public **with Drones**

The CAA has launched a public campaign to encourage the safe use of drones at a time when the public can't seem to get enough of them.

A recent survey by Airways highlighted a gap in understanding and attitudes towards compliance, and a divide between commercial and recreational operators in New Zealand.

In responses gathered from 1460 drone pilots, commercial operators reported being more stringent about following rules, with 72 percent saying they always fully complied, compared to 51 percent of recreational users.

CAA unmanned aircraft specialist Mark Houston says it's hoped the campaign will address that disparity.

He says people who operate a drone under Part 102 are well versed in how to fly safely but not so much the purely recreational users, most of whom have had no training.

"It's the recreational type folk that we traditionally haven't captured, we don't know who they are and where they are. Those are the ones we're really trying to educate about the aviation system."

Mark says the CAA needs to up the ante with drones continually evolving.

"What we're seeing is people are moving away from toy-like drones to much more sophisticated ones. Some are now going for more than \$2500. So people are getting into more advanced machines very quickly and all they want to do is get the thing out and go flying."

Engaging the non-aviator

The CAA knows it has to do more to connect with a demographic that isn't from an aviation background.

A website dedicated solely to safe drone use has been set up to present the most basic rules in an easy-to-understand way, and includes the use of videos and animation.

Andy Grant is chair of UAVNZ, the association for UAV professionals, mostly made up of Part 102 certificate holders.

He says it's the recreational users outside Part 102 who are of concern.

"There's a lot of people getting into drones for recreational use who don't necessarily understand that rules exist, and the importance of them," says Andy.

"If there's something that helps them understand the rules in the context of recreational flying, it should improve safety for everyone who uses the skies."

A new pamphlet *Fly the right way* is also being distributed at point of sale.

Changing attitudes

Mark says what they ultimately want is for drone operators to start behaving like aviators.

He says people need to appreciate that their drone is an aircraft, therefore they are a pilot.





"We want people to do a preflight check on their drone. Take time to look at the machinery to check for any defects. The propeller blades for example can pick up a loose stone on liftoff, nicking the blade. A little dint like that can lead to a crack. Sooner or later, if it's not replaced, the blade can fly apart, and the machine will crash."

Checking battery status is another routine that should become automatic.

"Have you got a fully charged battery? If not, what are you intending to do with the machine? There has to be enough battery to power the 'return home' function.

"Before people go flying, we want them to start thinking – what are you going to be doing, where are you doing it, and who are you going to affect?"

The new website is designed to make drone users think about some of those questions, and it includes a preflight checklist and frequently asked questions.

So what are some of the rules that cause the most angst?

"I think an understanding of where they are flying in relation to aerodromes is really the thing that appears to create the most apprehension," says Andy.

"I'm also aware the general public get annoyed by drones that appear to be potentially breaching their privacy."

The Airways survey also found respondents appeared to be less concerned about abiding by privacy regulations, with less than half saying they always ensure they have all the necessary land owner approvals.

There is a section on the website which addresses privacy with advice about seeking permission before you fly in certain areas.

"Before people go flying, we want them to start thinking – what are you going to be doing, where are you doing it, and who are you going to affect?"

He says if a Part 102 holder is approached by a member of the public querying what they are doing, having their credentials on them is useful.

"Also, all the Part 102 certificate holders are listed on the CAA website, so if you didn't have the physical certificate on hand, you could get your phone and show them you're listed there.

"Once that initial contact's been made and the drone operator has explained that they are doing a particular task and are certificated by the CAA, then generally the person's more interested than annoyed."

Mark says if you have just purchased a drone, putting in a little time at the start to educate yourself on the rules will go a long way.

"We want people to develop habits that will set them up for safe and enjoyable flying."

More information

Visit the new website: www.flyyourdrone.nz.

To order the free *Fly the right way* pamphlet, email info@caa.govt.nz.

For a list of Part 102 Unmanned Aircraft Operator Certificate Holders, www.caa.govt.nz, "Quick Links > Certificated Organisations" ■

