

NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

N JO 7200.20

Air Traffic Organization Policy

Effective Date:
September 30, 2025

Cancellation Date:
September 30, 2026

SUBJ: Operations Above the UASFM Altitudes for Vertical Structure Inspections

- 1. Purpose of this Notice.** This notice amends FAA Order JO 7200.23D; paragraph 3-1, Processing of 14 CFR Part 107.41, paragraph 4-5, Area Covered by Authorization and adds paragraph 3-6, Operations Above the UAS Facility Maps (UASFM) Altitudes for Vertical Structure Inspections to include revised policy, procedures, and additional language when air traffic control facility coordination is not required for small unmanned aircraft (sUAS) operators conducting vertical structure inspections within the National Airspace System (NAS).
- 2. Audience.** This notice applies to the following Air Traffic Organization (ATO) service units: Air Traffic Services, Safety and Technical Training, Service Centers, and all associated air traffic facilities.
- 3. Where can I Find This Notice?** This notice is available on the MyFAA employee website at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices/ and on the Air Traffic Plans and Publications website at https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/.
- 4. Background.** The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) identified a need for the standardization of sUAS operations for the purpose of vertical structure inspections in the NAS. Two companies entered into a Partnership for Safety Plan Memorandum of Understanding with the FAA to conduct vertical structure inspections. The proponents operated under a single national authorization without the requirement of additional authorization from local air traffic control (ATC) facilities. Data collected from these operations were evaluated to help implement national policy for the use of sUAS to perform specified inspections of certain vertical structures.
- 5. Procedures/Action.** Amend FAA Order JO 7200.23 by adding the following paragraphs to read as follows:

3-1. Proponent submits request through DroneZone.

Title through subparagraph d., No change

e. If the request does not comply with the UASFM altitude, the processor will coordinate the request with the impacted ATC facility unless operating in accordance with paragraph 3-6 of this order.

No further changes to paragraph

3-6. Operations Above the UASFM Altitudes for Vertical Structure Inspections.

a. All AA requests for sUAS operations conducting vertical structure inspections (e.g., cell towers, communications towers, high rises, but does not include vertical structures with horizontal spans, e.g. bridges, power lines) should be submitted through DroneZone, even for LAANC-enabled facilities.

b. ATC facility coordination is not required if the request is above the UASFM altitudes, but involves a sUAS visual line of sight operation conducting inspections of vertical structures, while meeting the criteria listed below:

(1) remains within a 100-foot radius and no more than 100 feet above the upper-most portion of the vertical tower structure,

(2) does not operate within two (2) nautical miles (NM) of any landing surface of an airport, heliport, seaplane base, or vertiport except as otherwise authorized under a separate AA,

(3) remains no less than 500 feet below and 2,000 feet horizontally from the clouds, and

(4) maintains a minimum flight visibility, as observed from the location of the control station of no less than three (3) statute miles (SM).

c. If approved under the criteria listed above, the AA must incorporate the following statement into the “Schedule of Flight Operations” section of the document:

[subparagraph]. *Operations by sUAS above the UASFM altitudes performing vertical structure inspections may be conducted if the following criteria are met, the sUAS must:*

(a) remain within a 100-foot radius of the structure and no more than 100 feet from the upper most portion of the vertical structure,

(b) remain within visual line of sight of the PIC,

(c) not operate within two (2) NM of any landing surface of an airport, heliport, or seaplane base, except as otherwise authorized under a separate AA,

(d) remain no less than 500 feet below and 2,000 feet horizontally from the clouds, and

(e) maintain a minimum flight visibility, as observed from the location of the control station, as no less than three (3) SM.

NOTE-

(a)-(e) shown above are used as examples, actual formatting should be done based on the airspace authorization.

d. A vertical structure inspection operator may be issued either a specific area or a wide area authorization based on the AA request by the company. This includes the ability to write a nationwide authorization for companies that make such a request. Based on the AA number (i.e. #####-P107-ESA-#####), the corresponding SC will be responsible for processing and making a determination on whether to approve or disapprove. For nation-wide requests, coordination with the other service centers is at the discretion of the processing Service

Center OSG Team Manager. Whether the other service centers are included in the processing of the request or not, the approved AA should be emailed to the other Team Managers for awareness.

No further changes to paragraph

4-5. Area Covered by Authorization.

a. A request for operations in conjunction with an operational waiver, or vertical structure inspection, can be issued either a specific area or a wide area authorization based on the authorization request.

b. For a specific area authorization, processors are not required to verify that operators meet the criteria of 3-6 b. above, however, they can do a cursory check as part of the approval process. If the proponent's request states that they meet the criteria for this type of operation, the language in paragraph 3-6 c.(a)-(e). will be included in the AA. It is then the proponent's responsibility to ensure they comply with the AA requirements.

6. Distribution. This notice is distributed to the following ATO service units: Air Traffic Services, Mission Support Services, System Operations, Safety and Technical Training; the Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service; the William J. Hughes Technical Center; and the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center.

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