



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

800 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

June 5, 2015

Exemption No. 11752
Regulatory Docket No. FAA-2015-0947

Mr. Courtney Bateman
Reed Smith, LLP
1301 K Street, NW, Suite 1000E
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Bateman:

This letter is to inform you that we have granted your request for exemption. It transmits our decision, explains its basis, and gives you the conditions and limitations of the exemption, including the date it ends.

By letter dated March 31, 2015, you petitioned the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on behalf of Snowy Owl Productions (hereinafter petitioner or operator) for an exemption. The petitioner requested to operate an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) to conduct aerial photography for structural assessment of tall structures such as wind turbines, communications towers and flare stacks, as well as aerial photography for real estate marketing and event photography.

See Appendix A for the petition submitted to the FAA describing the proposed operations and the regulations that the petitioner seeks an exemption.

The FAA has determined that good cause exists for not publishing a summary of the petition in the Federal Register because the requested exemption would not set a precedent, and any delay in acting on this petition would be detrimental to the petitioner.

Airworthiness Certification

The UAS proposed by the petitioner are the DJI Phantom 2 Vision+ and DJI S1000+.

In accordance with the statutory criteria provided in Section 333 of Public Law 112-95 in reference to 49 U.S.C. § 44704, and in consideration of the size, weight, speed, and limited

operating area associated with the aircraft and its operation, the Secretary of Transportation has determined that this aircraft meets the conditions of Section 333. Therefore, the FAA finds that relief from 14 CFR part 21, *Certification procedures for products and parts, Subpart H—Airworthiness Certificates*, and any associated noise certification and testing requirements of part 36, is not necessary.

The Basis for Our Decision

You have requested to use a UAS for aerial data collection¹. The FAA has issued grants of exemption in circumstances similar in all material respects to those presented in your petition. In Grants of Exemption Nos. 11062 to Astraeus Aerial (*see* Docket No. FAA–2014–0352), 11109 to Clayco, Inc. (*see* Docket No. FAA–2014–0507), 11112 to VDOS Global, LLC (*see* Docket No. FAA–2014–0382), and 11213 to Aeryon Labs, Inc. (*see* Docket No. FAA–2014–0642), the FAA found that the enhanced safety achieved using an unmanned aircraft (UA) with the specifications described by the petitioner and carrying no passengers or crew, rather than a manned aircraft of significantly greater proportions, carrying crew in addition to flammable fuel, gives the FAA good cause to find that the UAS operation enabled by this exemption is in the public interest.

Having reviewed your reasons for requesting an exemption, I find that—

- They are similar in all material respects to relief previously requested in Grant of Exemption Nos. 11062, 11109, 11112, and 11213;
- The reasons stated by the FAA for granting Exemption Nos. 11062, 11109, 11112, and 11213 also apply to the situation you present; and
- A grant of exemption is in the public interest.

Our Decision

In consideration of the foregoing, I find that a grant of exemption is in the public interest. Therefore, pursuant to the authority contained in 49 U.S.C. 106(f), 40113, and 44701, delegated to me by the Administrator, Snowy Owl Productions is granted an exemption from 14 CFR §§ 61.23(a) and (c), 61.101(e)(4) and (5), 61.113(a), 61.315(a), 91.7(a), 91.119(c), 91.121, 91.151(a)(1), 91.405(a), 91.407(a)(1), 91.409(a)(1) and (2), and 91.417(a) and (b), to the extent necessary to allow the petitioner to operate a UAS to perform aerial data collection. This exemption is subject to the conditions and limitations listed below.

¹ Aerial data collection includes any remote sensing and measuring by an instrument(s) aboard the UA. Examples include imagery (photography, video, infrared, etc.), electronic measurement (precision surveying, RF analysis, etc.), chemical measurement (particulate measurement, etc.), or any other gathering of data by instruments aboard the UA.

Conditions and Limitations

In this grant of exemption, Snowy Owl Productions is hereafter referred to as the operator.

Failure to comply with any of the conditions and limitations of this grant of exemption will be grounds for the immediate suspension or rescission of this exemption.

1. Operations authorized by this grant of exemption are limited to the DJI Phantom 2 Vision+ and DJI S1000+ when weighing less than 55 pounds including payload. Proposed operations of any other aircraft will require a new petition or a petition to amend this exemption.
2. Operations for the purpose of closed-set motion picture and television filming are not permitted.
3. The UA may not be operated at a speed exceeding 87 knots (100 miles per hour). The exemption holder may use either groundspeed or calibrated airspeed to determine compliance with the 87 knot speed restriction. In no case will the UA be operated at airspeeds greater than the maximum UA operating airspeed recommended by the aircraft manufacturer.
4. The UA must be operated at an altitude of no more than 400 feet above ground level (AGL). Altitude must be reported in feet AGL.
5. The UA must be operated within visual line of sight (VLOS) of the PIC at all times. This requires the PIC to be able to use human vision unaided by any device other than corrective lenses, as specified on the PIC's FAA-issued airman medical certificate or U.S. driver's license.
6. All operations must utilize a visual observer (VO). The UA must be operated within the visual line of sight (VLOS) of the PIC and VO at all times. The VO may be used to satisfy the VLOS requirement as long as the PIC always maintains VLOS capability. The VO and PIC must be able to communicate verbally at all times; electronic messaging or texting is not permitted during flight operations. The PIC must be designated before the flight and cannot transfer his or her designation for the duration of the flight. The PIC must ensure that the VO can perform the duties required of the VO.
7. This exemption and all documents needed to operate the UAS and conduct its operations in accordance with the conditions and limitations stated in this grant of exemption, are hereinafter referred to as the operating documents. The operating documents must be accessible during UAS operations and made available to the Administrator upon request. If a discrepancy exists between the conditions and limitations in this exemption and the procedures outlined in the operating documents,

the conditions and limitations herein take precedence and must be followed. Otherwise, the operator must follow the procedures as outlined in its operating documents. The operator may update or revise its operating documents. It is the operator's responsibility to track such revisions and present updated and revised documents to the Administrator or any law enforcement official upon request. The operator must also present updated and revised documents if it petitions for extension or amendment to this grant of exemption. If the operator determines that any update or revision would affect the basis upon which the FAA granted this exemption, then the operator must petition for an amendment to its grant of exemption. The FAA's UAS Integration Office (AFS-80) may be contacted if questions arise regarding updates or revisions to the operating documents.

8. Any UAS that has undergone maintenance or alterations that affect the UAS operation or flight characteristics, e.g., replacement of a flight critical component, must undergo a functional test flight prior to conducting further operations under this exemption. Functional test flights may only be conducted by a PIC with a VO and must remain at least 500 feet from other people. The functional test flight must be conducted in such a manner so as to not pose an undue hazard to persons and property.
9. The operator is responsible for maintaining and inspecting the UAS to ensure that it is in a condition for safe operation.
10. Prior to each flight, the PIC must conduct a pre-flight inspection and determine the UAS is in a condition for safe flight. The pre-flight inspection must account for all potential discrepancies, e.g., inoperable components, items, or equipment. If the inspection reveals a condition that affects the safe operation of the UAS, the aircraft is prohibited from operating until the necessary maintenance has been performed and the UAS is found to be in a condition for safe flight.
11. The operator must follow the UAS manufacturer's maintenance, overhaul, replacement, inspection, and life limit requirements for the aircraft and aircraft components.
12. Each UAS operated under this exemption must comply with all manufacturer safety bulletins.
13. Under this grant of exemption, a PIC must hold either an airline transport, commercial, private, recreational, or sport pilot certificate. The PIC must also hold a current FAA airman medical certificate or a valid U.S. driver's license issued by a state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, a territory, a possession, or the Federal government. The PIC must also meet the flight review requirements specified in 14 CFR § 61.56 in an aircraft in which the PIC is rated on his or her pilot certificate.

14. The operator may not permit any PIC to operate unless the PIC demonstrates the ability to safely operate the UAS in a manner consistent with how the UAS will be operated under this exemption, including evasive and emergency maneuvers and maintaining appropriate distances from persons, vessels, vehicles and structures. PIC qualification flight hours and currency must be logged in a manner consistent with 14 CFR § 61.51(b). Flights for the purposes of training the operator's PICs and VOs (training, proficiency, and experience-building) and determining the PIC's ability to safely operate the UAS in a manner consistent with how the UAS will be operated under this exemption are permitted under the terms of this exemption. However, training operations may only be conducted during dedicated training sessions. During training, proficiency, and experience-building flights, all persons not essential for flight operations are considered nonparticipants, and the PIC must operate the UA with appropriate distance from nonparticipants in accordance with 14 CFR § 91.119.
15. UAS operations may not be conducted during night, as defined in 14 CFR § 1.1. All operations must be conducted under visual meteorological conditions (VMC). Flights under special visual flight rules (SVFR) are not authorized.
16. The UA may not operate within 5 nautical miles of an airport reference point (ARP) as denoted in the current FAA Airport/Facility Directory (AFD) or for airports not denoted with an ARP, the center of the airport symbol as denoted on the current FAA-published aeronautical chart, unless a letter of agreement with that airport's management is obtained or otherwise permitted by a COA issued to the exemption holder. The letter of agreement with the airport management must be made available to the Administrator or any law enforcement official upon request.
17. The UA may not be operated less than 500 feet below or less than 2,000 feet horizontally from a cloud or when visibility is less than 3 statute miles from the PIC.
18. If the UAS loses communications or loses its GPS signal, the UA must return to a pre-determined location within the private or controlled-access property.
19. The PIC must abort the flight in the event of unpredicted obstacles or emergencies.
20. The PIC is prohibited from beginning a flight unless (considering wind and forecast weather conditions) there is enough available power for the UA to conduct the intended operation and to operate after that for at least five minutes or with the reserve power recommended by the manufacturer if greater.
21. Air Traffic Organization (ATO) Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA). All operations shall be conducted in accordance with an ATO-issued COA. The exemption holder may apply for a new or amended COA if it intends to conduct operations that cannot be conducted under the terms of the attached COA.

22. All aircraft operated in accordance with this exemption must be identified by serial number, registered in accordance with 14 CFR part 47, and have identification (N-Number) markings in accordance with 14 CFR part 45, Subpart C. Markings must be as large as practicable.
23. Documents used by the operator to ensure the safe operation and flight of the UAS and any documents required under 14 CFR §§ 91.9 and 91.203 must be available to the PIC at the Ground Control Station of the UAS any time the aircraft is operating. These documents must be made available to the Administrator or any law enforcement official upon request.
24. The UA must remain clear and give way to all manned aviation operations and activities at all times.
25. The UAS may not be operated by the PIC from any moving device or vehicle.
26. All Flight operations must be conducted at least 500 feet from all nonparticipating persons, vessels, vehicles, and structures unless:
 - a. Barriers or structures are present that sufficiently protect nonparticipating persons from the UA and/or debris in the event of an accident. The operator must ensure that nonparticipating persons remain under such protection. If a situation arises where nonparticipating persons leave such protection and are within 500 feet of the UA, flight operations must cease immediately in a manner ensuring the safety of nonparticipating persons; and
 - b. The owner/controller of any vessels, vehicles or structures has granted permission for operating closer to those objects and the PIC has made a safety assessment of the risk of operating closer to those objects and determined that it does not present an undue hazard.

The PIC, VO, operator trainees or essential persons are not considered nonparticipating persons under this exemption.

27. All operations shall be conducted over private or controlled-access property with permission from the property owner/controller or authorized representative. Permission from property owner/controller or authorized representative will be obtained for each flight to be conducted.
28. Any incident, accident, or flight operation that transgresses the lateral or vertical boundaries of the operational area as defined by the applicable COA must be reported to the FAA's UAS Integration Office (AFS-80) within 24 hours. Accidents must be reported to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) per instructions contained on the NTSB Web site: www.nts.gov.

If this exemption permits operations for the purpose of closed-set motion picture and television filming and production, the following additional conditions and limitations apply.

29. The operator must have a motion picture and television operations manual (MPTOM) as documented in this grant of exemption.
30. At least 3 days before aerial filming, the operator of the UAS affected by this exemption must submit a written Plan of Activities to the local Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) with jurisdiction over the area of proposed filming. The 3-day notification may be waived with the concurrence of the FSDO. The plan of activities must include at least the following:
 - a. Dates and times for all flights;
 - b. Name and phone number of the operator for the UAS aerial filming conducted under this grant of exemption;
 - c. Name and phone number of the person responsible for the on-scene operation of the UAS;
 - d. Make, model, and serial or N-Number of UAS to be used;
 - e. Name and certificate number of UAS PICs involved in the aerial filming;
 - f. A statement that the operator has obtained permission from property owners and/or local officials to conduct the filming production event; the list of those who gave permission must be made available to the inspector upon request;
 - g. Signature of exemption holder or representative; and
 - h. A description of the flight activity, including maps or diagrams of any area, city, town, county, and/or state over which filming will be conducted and the altitudes essential to accomplish the operation.
31. Flight operations may be conducted closer than 500 feet from participating persons consenting to be involved and necessary for the filming production, as specified in the exemption holder's MPTOM.

Unless otherwise specified in this grant of exemption, the UAS, the UAS PIC, and the UAS operations must comply with all applicable parts of 14 CFR including, but not limited to, parts 45, 47, 61, and 91.

This exemption terminates on June 30, 2017, unless sooner superseded or rescinded.

Sincerely,

/s/

John S. Duncan

Director, Flight Standards Service

Enclosures



Courtney R. Bateman
Direct Phone: +1 202 414 9265
Email: CBateman@reedsmith.com

Reed Smith LLP
1301 K Street, N.W.
Suite 1100 - East Tower
Washington, D.C. 20005-3373
Tel +1 202 414 9200
Fax +1 202 414 9299
reedsmith.com

March 31, 2015

U. S. Department of Transportation Docket
Management System
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Snowy Owl Productions' Request for Exemption from Certain Regulations per Section 333 of the FAA Reform Act and Part 11 of the Federal Aviation Regulations

Dear Sir or Madam:

Pursuant to Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (the Reform Act) and 14 C.F.R. Part 11, Snowy Owl Productions ("Snowy Owl") hereby applies for an exemption from the listed Federal Aviation Regulations ("FARs") to allow business use (commercial operation) of its sUASs, so long as such operations are conducted within and under the conditions outlined herein or as may be established by the FAA as required by Section 333.

I. INTRODUCTION

Snowy Owl Productions is headquartered in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Snow Owl seeks to operate sUAS to conduct aerial photography for structural assessment of tall structures such as wind turbines, communications towers and flare stacks, as well as aerial photography for real estate marketing and event photography.

In support of its application, Snowy Owl submits confidentially a Flight Operations Manual and flight manuals for the DJI Phantom 2 Vision+ and S1000+.

Specific Regulations for which an exemption is sought:

14 CFR 61.113 (a)	14 CFR 91.405 (a)
14 CFR 91.7(a)	14 CFR 407 (a) (1)
14 CFR 91.119(b) & (c)	14 CFR 409 (a) (1) & (2)
14 CFR 91.121	14 CFR 417 (a) & (b)
14 CFR 91.151 (a)	

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II. SNOWY OWL'S PROPOSED OPERATIONS DO NOT CREATE SIGNIFICANT HAZARDS

The sUAS's utilized by Snowy Owl are electric multi-rotor craft, weighing less than 55 lbs. including payload. They operate at a speed of no more than 33.5 mph (29 knots) and have the capability to hover, and/or move in a vertical and horizontal plane simultaneously. They will only be operated as visual line of sight (VLOS), remain under 400ft. above ground level, and will operate only over private property with permission of the owners of the property.

During the proposed operations involving aerial inspection of structures and real estate, the site will be secured, and non-participants will be kept at least 500 feet away from the operation. Similarly, operations during event photography will occur at least 500 feet from all non-participants unless barriers or structures are present that sufficiently protect non-participants in the event of an accident or loss of control.

Occasionally, in executing event photography, Snowy Owl may wish to operate within 500 feet of nonparticipants. To meet the "barriers or structures" requirement set forth in prior FAA Grants of Exemption and referenced above, Snowy Owl proposes a tether system to be used during those operations. As explained more fully in its certification documents, Snowy Owl's tether system would physically prevent the sUAS from getting closer than 100 feet from non-participants.

Snowy Owl has drafted, and submits confidentially, a Flight Operations Manual which discusses safety considerations, training and general operating procedures for the proposed operations. Snowy Owl has also drafted, and submits confidentially, an sUAS Aircraft Flight Manual which sets for the specifications, inspection and setup of the sUAS intended for use in the proposed operations.

III. SNOWY OWL'S PROPOSED OPERATIONS ARE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The FAA recently issued a Grant of Exemption to FalconSkyCam for operations that are substantially similar to those proposed herein. Docket No. FAA-2014-0884 (used March 6, 2015). In issuing the Grant, the FAA noted that "[t]he enhanced safety and reduced environmental impact achieved using a UAS with the specifications described by the petitioner and carrying no passengers or crew, rather than a manned aircraft of significantly greater proportions, carrying crew in addition to flammable fuel, gives the FAA good cause to find that the UAS operation enabled by this exemption is in the public interest."

Accordingly, Snowy Owl respectfully requests that the FAA grant the requested exemption without delay.

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IV. EQUIVALENT LEVEL OF SAFETY

Snowy Owl proposes that the exemption requested herein apply to civil aircraft that have the characteristics and operate with the limitations listed herein. These limitations, as listed below, provide for at least an equivalent or even higher level of safety to operations under the current regulatory structure.

These limitations and conditions to which Snowy Owl agrees to be bound when conducting commercial operations under an FAA issued exemption include:

The sUASs utilized by Snowy Owl will weigh less than 55 lbs.

Flights will be operated during daylight hours, in visual meteorological conditions, and within visual line of sight (VLOS) of the pilot of the UAS.

All operations will utilize a visual observer in addition to the operator.

Maximum total flight time for each operational flight will be approximately 30 minutes, or when the Low Battery warning activates.

If operations will be conducted within 500 feet of nonparticipants, the UAS will be tethered to ensure it will remain at least 100 feet away from nonparticipants in the event of an accident or loss of control.

V. EXEMPTIONS REQUESTED

14 C.F.R. § 61.113(a) and (b): Private vs. Commercial Pilot Certificates

Sections 61.113(a) and (b) prohibit private pilots from operating an aircraft for compensation or hire. Snowy Owl proposes that its pilots will have at least a private pilot's certificate, and a Class II medical. Its operations will be conducted over private property, in a sterile area as reflected in Snowy Owl's Flight Operations Manual. For the reasons set forth in the FAA's grant of an exemption to Astraeus Aerial, Snowy Owl does not believe a commercial pilot certificate is necessary for the operations it intends to conduct. See, e.g., In the matter of the petition of Astraeus Aerial, Exemption No. 11062 (issued Sept. 25, 2014). For those reasons, Snowy Owl requests an exemption from 14 C.F.R. § 61.113(a) and (b).

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14 C.F.R. § 91.7(a): Civil Aircraft Airworthiness

Section 91.7 prohibits operation of an unairworthy aircraft, and places responsibility for airworthiness determinations on the pilot in command. The sUAS will not have an airworthiness certificate, and there is no FAA regulatory standard for determining airworthiness of the sUAS. Additionally, Snowy Owl's operating documents set forth inspection and maintenance procedures to ensure airworthiness. For these reasons, and in accordance with the FAA's grant of an exemption from 91.7 to Total Safety U.S., Inc., Snowy Owl requests an exemption from 14 CFR. § 91.7(a). See, e.g., In the matter of the petition of Total Safety U.S., Inc., Exemption No. 11156 (issued Jan. 29, 2015).

14 C.F.R. §91.119(b) and (c): Minimum Safe Altitudes

Section 91.119 establishes safe altitudes for operation of civil aircraft. Section 91.119(b) prohibits aircraft in congested areas from flying less than 1,000 feet above the highest obstacle within a horizontal radius of 2,000 feet of the aircraft. To the extent that the structures that Snowy Owl would be inspecting are considered to be in "congested areas,"¹ Snowy Owl's operational procedures, and the size, weight and speed of the sUAS, provide an equivalent level of safety such that operations at lower altitudes should be allowed.

As described in its Flight Operations Manual, Snowy Owl will establish a 500' buffer/sterile area for its operations that will exclude personnel not associated with the operations. Snowy Owl will also exercise additional control over the sterile area as needed, as set forth in the Manual. Consequently, Snowy Owl believes these procedures will reduce or eliminate any potential adverse impacts to safety for operations in congested areas. Snowy Owl therefore requests an exemption from 14 CFR § 91.119(b).

Section 91.119 (c) prohibits operations in other than congested areas below 500 feet above the surface, or closer than 500 feet to any person, vessel, vehicle or structure. As this exemption is for an sUAS that flies similarly to a helicopter and the exemption requests authority to operate at altitudes up to 400 AGL, an exemption may be needed to allow such operations.

The equivalent level of safety will be achieved given the size, weight, speed of the UAS as well as the location where it is operated. As discussed above, Snowy Owl's Flight Operations Manual provides for establishment of a sterile area, included safety buffers of 500 feet for personnel not associated with the operation. A 100 foot safety buffer will be in place for authorized personnel associated with the operation, unless the PIC determines a reduced buffer is essential to the current operation. Snowy Owl therefore requests an exemption from Section 91.119(c) for all authorized personnel associated with the operation.

¹ The FAA Office of the Chief Counsel has indicated that whether an area is "congested" is determined on a case-by-case basis. See, e.g., June 18, 2012, Memorandum from Rebecca B. MacPherson, Assistant Chief Counsel for Regulations, to James E. Gardner, Manager, Flight Standards Division, re "To what extent an operator can make a congested area uncongested."

14 C.F.R. §91.121 Altimeter Settings

This regulation requires each person operating an aircraft to maintain cruising altitude by reference to an altimeter that is set "... to the elevation of the departure airport or an appropriate altimeter setting available before departure." As the sUAS may not have a barometric altimeter, but instead a GPS altitude read out, an exemption may be needed.

14 C.F.R. § 91.151(a): Fuel Requirements for Flight in VFR Conditions

Section 91.151 (a) prohibits an individual from beginning "a flight in an airplane under VFR conditions unless (considering wind and forecast weather conditions) there is enough fuel to fly to the first point of intended landing, and, assuming normal cruising speed – (1) During the day, to fly after that for at least 30 minutes; or (2) At night, to fly after that for at least 45 minutes."

Maximum total flight time for each operational flight will be no more than 25 minutes. Flights will be safely landed when the battery falls below its nominal voltage, should that occur prior to completion of the operation. The DJI Phantom 2 Vision+ and the S1000+ have a Low Voltage LED Warning which alerts when the battery reaches pre-determined levels. This battery level would be more than adequate to return the sUAS to its planned landing zone from anywhere in its limited operating area when the Low Voltage Warning alerts.

For these reasons, Snowy Owl requests an exemption from 14 C.F.R. § 91.151(a). Similar exemptions have been granted to other operations, including Exemptions 2689F, 5745, 10673, and 10808.

14 C.F.R. §91.405 (a); 407 (a) (1); 409 (a) (1) & (2); 417(a) & (b): Maintenance Inspections

These regulations require that an aircraft operator or owner "shall have that aircraft inspected as prescribed in subpart E of this part and shall between required inspections, except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section, have discrepancies repaired as prescribed in part 43 of this chapter ...," and others shall inspect or maintain the aircraft in compliance with Part 43.

As provided in Snowy Owl's Operations Manual, the operator will ensure that the UAS is in working order prior to initiating flight, perform required maintenance and inspections, and keep a log of any maintenance performed.

VI. REGULATIONS FOR WHICH EXEMPTIONS ARE UNNECESSARY

The Federal Aviation Administration just issued a number of exemptions for UAS operations in filming of movies. In those exemptions, the agency noted that exemptions from certain regulations were not necessary, due to "the size, weight, speed and limited operating area associated with [the UASs] and its operation."

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Based upon the FAA's guidance, and the fact that Snowy Owl's UAS is even smaller and slower than those proposed by the film-making industry, Snowy Owl believes exemptions from the following regulations are not necessary:

- 14 C.F.R. Part 21, Subpart H: Airworthiness Certificates
- 14 C.F.R. § 45.23 (b). Marking of the Aircraft
- 14 C.F.R. §91.7(b): Civil aircraft airworthiness.
- 14 C.F.R. §91.109: Flight instruction.

Snowy Owl also believes that an exemption from 14 C.F.R. § 91.103: Preflight Action, is not necessary. This regulation requires each pilot in command to take certain actions before flight to insure the safety of flight. An FAA approved rotorcraft flight manual will not be provided for the aircraft. An equivalent level of safety will be provided as set forth in the operating documents submitted as part of this request.

The FAA has previously found that adherence to procedures contained in an applicant's operating documents demonstrate compliance with § 91.103, and therefore an exemption from the regulation was not necessary. See, e.g., In the matter of the petition of Total Safety U.S., Inc., Exemption No. 11156 (issued Jan. 29, 2015).

As detailed in its operating documents, Snowy Owl's PIC will take all actions including reviewing weather, flight battery requirements, landing and takeoff clearance distances and aircraft performance data before initiation of flight to ensure the safety of the flight. Consequently, in light of the agency's prior finding in Total Safety U.S., Inc., Snowy Owl does not believe an exemption from 14 C.F.R. § 91.103 is necessary.

Pursuant to 14 C.F.R. Part 11, the following summary is provided for publication in the Federal Register, should it be determined that publication is needed:

Snowy Owl seeks an exemption from the following rules:

14 C.F.R. § 61.113(a) and (b); 91.7 (a); 91.119(b) and (c); 91.121; 91.151(a); 91.405 (a); 91.407 (a) (1); 91.409 (a) (1) & (2) and 91.417 (a) & (b) to conduct aerial photography for structural assessment of tall structures such as wind turbines, communications towers and flare stacks, as well as aerial photography for real estate marketing and event photography.

Approval of exemptions allowing commercial operations of sUASs for these applications will enhance safety by reducing risk. Conventional means for performing these assessments require either physically climbing the poles or towers, using ropes to rappel down the tower from the top of the tower, using high-reach man lifts to access the towers (limited reach), or using conventional helicopters operating at extremely low altitudes over the subject structure being photographed. These conventional means all pose risks to persons and property.

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In contrast, a sUAS weighing less than 55 lbs. and powered by batteries, eliminates virtually all of that risk given the reduced mass and lack of combustible fuel carried on board. The sUAS is carried to the project site and not flown. The sUAS will carry no passengers or crew and, therefore, will not expose them to the risks associated with manned aircraft flights, ground-based aerial lift (bucket truck) operations, or manual climbing and inspection operations.

The operation of small UASs, weighing less than 55 lbs., conducted in the strict conditions outlined above, will provide an equivalent level of safety supporting the grant of the exemptions requested herein, including exempting Snowy Owl from the requirements of Part 21 and allowing commercial operations. These lightweight aircraft operate at slow speeds, and close to the ground, and, as a result, are far safer than conventional alternatives.

Privacy

All flights will occur over private or controlled access property with the property owner's prior consent and knowledge.

Satisfaction of the criteria provided in Section 333 of the Reform Act of 2012--size, weight, speed, operating capabilities, proximity to airports and populated areas and operation within visual line of sight and national security – provide more than adequate justification for the grant of the requested exemptions allowing commercial operation of Snowy Owl's sUAS to conduct aerial photography for structural assessment of tall structures such as wind turbines, communications towers and flare stacks, as well as aerial photography for real estate marketing and event photography.

Sincerely,



Courtney R. Bateman
Reed Smith LLP
Counsel for Snowy Owl

/Signed/

John McGraw
John McGraw Aerospace Consulting
Consultant to Snowy Owl

CRB:lsj