



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

December 9, 2020

Dear Tribal Leader:

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) – also known as drones – are a rapidly evolving technology. Tribal governments have played a key role in pioneering the use of drones to benefit their communities: the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma was one of nine participants in the Integration Pilot Program and will continue to participate in the new BEYOND program ([https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs\\_partnerships/beyond/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs_partnerships/beyond/)) and other tribes have explored the use of drones to carry out activities from forest management to wildlife monitoring to surveying for cultural resources.

The FAA has made great strides in developing the technical and regulatory standards, policy guidance, and operational procedures on which successful UAS integration depends. Many of FAA's UAS-related activities and accomplishments are captured in numerous online resources. As we move forward to safely integrate UAS into the National Airspace System, we want to make sure that you have the resources you may need to understand the regulatory framework for drones and take advantage of their potential.

As a starting point to help you to access the extensive materials available online and provide a general understanding of the FAA's framework for UAS integration, we want to point you to some specific resources.

For a broad overview on FAA's efforts to integrate UAS, FAA's integration roadmap (2020) can be found at:

[https://www.faa.gov/uas/resources/policy\\_library/media/2019\\_UAS\\_Civil\\_Integration\\_Roadmap\\_third\\_edition.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/uas/resources/policy_library/media/2019_UAS_Civil_Integration_Roadmap_third_edition.pdf)

For drone pilots, there are rules and safety tips to help fly safely in the national airspace. Depending on the type of drone user, there are rules and regulations that apply to specific situations. Further information about the rules and regulations for certain types of users can be found at these web sites:

- Public Safety and Government users: [https://www.faa.gov/uas/public\\_safety\\_gov/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/public_safety_gov/)
- Recreational flyers under 49 U.S.C. §44809):  
[https://www.faa.gov/uas/recreational\\_fliers/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/recreational_fliers/)
- Certificated Remote Pilots, including Commercial Operators:  
[https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial\\_operators/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/)
- Educational users: [https://www.faa.gov/uas/educational\\_users/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/educational_users/)

- For more complex and advanced drone operations, like package delivery: [https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced\\_operations/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced_operations/)

If drone operators need relief from regulatory requirements, they may be able to apply for relief from those requirements.

- FAA can grant waivers for certain unmanned aircraft operations outside of the regulations: [https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial\\_operators/part\\_107\\_waivers/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/part_107_waivers/)
- FAA can also grant exemptions to regulatory requirements on a case by case basis: [https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced\\_operations/certification/section\\_44807/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced_operations/certification/section_44807/)

FAA has proposed regulations that could affect UAS users:

- FAA proposed a rule that would require most UAS to remotely identify. The notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) for Remote Identification of Unmanned Aircraft can be found here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/12/31/2019-28100/remote-identification-of-unmanned-aircraft-systems>. A summary of the NPRM can be found here: <https://beta.regulations.gov/document/FAA-2019-1100-9461>.
- FAA has issued an NPRM that would amend the Part 107 regulations to permit UAS operations at night and over people under certain conditions and further integrate drones safely into the NAS. That NPRM can be found here: <https://beta.regulations.gov/document/FAA-2018-1087-0001>.

These rules are expected to be finalized soon. After publication of these final rules, the FAA will be providing information on our website (<https://www.faa.gov/uas/>).

The FAA is continuing to work to advance drone research and development activities.

Information on this work and critical partnerships can be found at:

[https://www.faa.gov/uas/research\\_development/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/research_development/).

FAA's website has the latest on drones (<https://www.faa.gov/uas/>) and you can follow FAA on social media as well ([https://www.faa.gov/news/stay\\_connected/](https://www.faa.gov/news/stay_connected/)).

We invite you to contact us with any questions or concerns that you may have about UAS. You can call 844-FLY-MY-UA or email [UAShelp@faa.gov](mailto:UAShelp@faa.gov). The FAA stands ready to consult with tribes on any issue that has substantial direct effects on the tribe.

Sincerely,

Jay Merkle  
Executive Director, Office of UAS Integration