

Flying of RPAS (Drones) in Rwanda

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1. [What is an RPAS?](#)

A remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) is an aircraft that is operated with no pilot on board. An RPAS, or drone as it is commonly known, is one part of a remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS), which includes other associated components, such as the remote control equipment.

2. [Are toy aircraft considered as RPAS \(drones\)?](#)

No.

3. [What are the acceptable uses of RPAS?](#)

The following are the accepted uses RPAS:

- (a) Aerial photography/Filming;
- (b) Agriculture for crop monitoring/inspection;
- (c) Search and rescue or delivery of emergency supplies;
- (d) Research and development;
- (e) Educational/academic uses; and
- (f) Recreational/Leisure.

4. [Do I need a permit to fly an RPA in Rwanda?](#)

Yes. You need a permit if you want to fly an RPAS outdoors.

5. [What are the different types of permits?](#)

(a) RPAS Activity Permit

An RPAS Activity Permit is granted by RCAA to an applicant for a single activity or a block of repeated activities to be carried out at a specific area of operation, and which are of specific operational profiles and conditions. The permit is valid for the period of activity.

(b) RPAS Operator Certificate

An RPAS Operator Certificate is granted by RCAA to an applicant if the applicant is able to ensure safe operation of RPA, taking into account the applicant's organisational set-up, competency of the personnel especially those flying the RPA, procedures to manage safety including the conduct of safety risk assessments, and the airworthiness of each of the aircraft. The certificate is valid for up to one year.

(c) Other Permits

Other permits may be required from various agencies for certain aspects of the RPAS operation that come under their purview, such as Rwanda National Police (RNP) or Rwanda Defense Force (RDF) for aerial photography and/or overflight of security-sensitive locations, or Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency (RURA) for the use of radio frequencies.

6. [How do I apply for a permit to fly an RPA?](#)

RCAA is the one-stop for the application of all permits for RPAS operations. RCAA will process and coordinate with other relevant agencies on the evaluation of applications for any permit, and respond to the applicants on the outcome of their application. Application for RPAS operating certificate or permit is made on Form *RCAA-Form-RPAS002* obtained from RCAA Office or downloaded from RCAA website: www.caa.gov.rw.

7. [How long is the permit application processing time?](#)

Applicants are encouraged to submit their application well in advance of the date of their RPAS activity.

(a) RPAS Activity Permit

The expected processing time for an application is at least 2 to 4 weeks for an Activity Permits, although straightforward cases or applications for RPAS Activity Permits may take a shorter time, presuming that the documents are received in good order. The processing time

includes time required for assessment of submitted documents and coordination with other competent security agencies for security vetting prior to permit issuance.

(b) RPAS Operator Certificate

The expected processing time for an application is at least 2 months for RPAS Operator Certificates. Applications for an RPAS Operator Certificate require a more in-depth evaluation by RCAA and/or other agencies, or further discussions with the applicant. RCAA will process and coordinate with other relevant agencies such as Ministry of Internal Security (Rwanda National Police), Ministry of Defense and Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency (RURA), where applicable. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

8. [How do I know if my application has been approved?](#)

RCAA will notify the applicants on the outcome of their application for any permit or certificate.

9. [Why is there a need to regulate the use of unmanned aircraft?](#)

With the increasing use of unmanned aircraft, there is a need to regulate their operations to manage aviation safety, public safety, privacy and security risks over security-sensitive locations. The enhanced regulatory and permit framework for unmanned aircraft operations in Rwanda seek to enhance safe and responsible operation of unmanned aircraft to ensure aviation safety, public safety, privacy and security.

10. [What do the unmanned aircraft system regulations entail?](#)

The unmanned aircraft system regulations provide for an enhanced regulatory and permit framework for unmanned aircraft operations in Rwanda. The enhanced framework:

- a. provide for operations of RPA of maximum take-off weight not exceeding 25 kilograms;

- b. limit the operations of RPA to visual line of sight (VLOS) operations (i.e., the lateral distance between the RPA and the remote pilot must not be more than 300 metres);
- c. prohibit flying an RPA at a speed exceeding 87 knots (100 metres/hour);
- e. prohibit operators from flying or operating an RPA above an altitude of 100 metres;
- f. prohibit operations of RPA at lateral distance of less than 50 m from any person, building, structure, vehicle, vessel or animal not associated with the remotely piloted aircraft operation;
- g. prohibit an RPA from fly over people or congested areas unless a permit is issued;
- h. prohibit operators from flying or operating an RPA within 10 km of an aerodrome regardless of height, unless authorized to do so;
- i. prohibit an RPA from overflying or taking photographs of a prohibited areas;
- j. prohibit night operations of RPA;
- k. prohibit a person from acting as a pilot or operator flying more than one RPAS at the same time;
- l. require operators to obtain a permit or certificate to fly or operate an RPA;
- m. require operators of RPAS to subscribe for liability insurance;
- n. provide the necessary enforcement powers to deter malicious or dangerous RPAS activities which may threaten public safety and security;

11. [What are prohibited areas?](#)

An airspace of defined dimensions, above the land areas or water within which the flight of aircraft is prohibited.

An RPA is prohibited from overflying a prohibited area or taking photographs of a prohibited unless the operator has a permit to do so.

The specific locations of the prohibited areas are published in Rwanda Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP).

12. [Why are RPA operations prohibited over people or congested area?](#)

The operation of RPA over a person or crowd of people or congested area could pose a threat to public safety and security.

13. [What are the conditions for use of radio frequencies for RPAS?](#)

Due to the risk of interference or loss of control of the RPA, operators of RPA that contain wireless devices have to comply with Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency's (RURA) regulations, including:

- a. Prohibition on causing interference to the operation of any radio-communication station or network authorised or licensed by RURA; and
- b. Operating within the designated radio frequency bands and maximum approved field strength or power limits stated by RURA.

For more information, please refer to www.rura.gov.rw .

14. [Are privacy issues addressed in the RPAS requirements?](#)

No. Pertaining to privacy issues, incidents of a person using an RPA to pry into another person's property and privacy will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the context and circumstances. As a general principle, enforcement action will be taken against users whose activities constitute an offence under existing laws such as the Penal Code.

15. [How would the authorities enforce compliance to these new regulations?](#)

Breaches of the regulations on RPAS will be investigated by safety inspectors authorised by RCAA in coordination with police officers.

If the RPA is flying in contravention of the regulations, the authorised officers can order the operator of the RPA to:

(a) end the flight;

(b) land the RPA; or

(c) fly the RPA in a specified manner, if the RPA is being operated in a manner that poses a serious and an imminent risk to the safety of the public.

RCAA may, if deemed necessary for the safety and security of civil aviation, modify, suspend or revoke any licence or certificate issued under these regulations. Offenders may also be liable to administrative fine or prosecution.

If you are unable to find an answer to your query, please email us at d.fss@caa.gov.rw to let us know how we can help you.