

# Quick Start Guide

## to the regulations for model flying - JANUARY 2025



### KNOW THE LAW



There are regulations for operating unmanned aircraft (drones) and full details can be found in **UK Regulations (EU) 2019/947**.

BMFA members (including those with British Drone Flyers membership) can choose to operate under the Open Category of the Regulation or the BMFA's 'Article 16 Authorisation' issued by the CAA.

The BMFA 'Authorisation' defines different and more flexible operating requirements for members operating aircraft up to 25Kg. To benefit from the Authorisation, you must familiarise yourself with the requirements.

For full details, please see <https://rcc.bmfa.uk/article-16>.

### HOW HIGH CAN I FLY?



The height limit for all unmanned aircraft in UK Regulations (EU) 2019/947 is 400ft (120m) above the terrain.

BMFA members may operate:

- Model aircraft above 400ft (excluding multi-rotors) which weigh less than 7.5 Kg.
- Sail planes over 7.5 Kg, (but not exceeding 14kg), up to 400ft above the pilot (rather than the terrain).

Model aircraft weighing more than 7.5 Kg must not be flown higher than 400ft without permission from the BMFA.

### REGISTERED AND COMPETENT



It is a legal requirement for most model flyers to register as an Operator with the CAA (if 18 or over) and have evidence of their competency (regardless of age) before they fly.

**You can register as an Operator through the BMFA.**

Model flyers must also provide evidence of remote pilot competency by obtaining a CAA Flyer I.D. by taking the CAA online DMARES test or the BMFA's RCC online test.

A CAA Operator I.D. number must be displayed on (or be easily accessible within) the aircraft.

### VISUAL LINE OF SIGHT



**You must operate your aircraft within visual line of sight (VLOS).** If flying using first person view, you must have a competent observer next to you who maintains VLOS with your aircraft. Special rules apply to FPV drone racing within a 'sterile area'.

Free flight aircraft must not be deliberately flown beyond VLOS.

### FLY SAFELY



You must not endanger the safety of any uninvolved person or any vessel, vehicle or structure not under your control when you fly your unmanned aircraft.

**Under the BMFA's Authorisation, for aircraft under 7.5kg, do not fly within:**

- 30m of uninvolved people.
  - 30m horizontal distance from an assembly of people.
- The distance can be reduced to 15m for take-off and landing in some circumstances.*

**For aircraft over 7.5kg (or any aircraft operated by FPV) do not fly within:**

- 30m of uninvolved people.
- 50m horizontal distance from an assembly of people.

**Flying within 'built up areas' is only permitted subject to the conditions outlined in our guidance.**

### MANNED AIRCRAFT



You must do everything possible to avoid conflict with any manned aircraft.

It is illegal to fly any unmanned aircraft (except control line) within a Flight Restriction Zone (FRZ) around an airport/airfield without permission (see our guidance for details).

To ensure that you are not operating within an FRZ or airspace subject to restrictions, please check the UAS Restrictions Map at <https://nats-uk.ead-it.com/>.

Endangering the safety of a manned aircraft could result in a five-year prison sentence.

### YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE



**You are legally responsible for ensuring that your flights are conducted safely.** It is essential that you are aware of the laws which apply.

Our Article 16 Authorisation covers flying for sport, recreation, education and demonstration. It excludes any flying for commercial purposes.

For further details of Operator and Remote Pilot responsibilities, please refer to our full guidance.

**Failure to operate lawfully could result in criminal prosecution.**

### MINIMUM AGE



There is no minimum age for a remote pilot, but they must have evidence of competency if operating without the supervision of a competent remote pilot.

Under 18's will need someone to act as their Operator and be registered with the CAA.

### IF THINGS GO WRONG



The law requires the reporting of certain occurrences:

- Serious accidents and incidents to the AAIB.
- Serious incidents and a range of other occurrences (including breaches of the terms of our Authorisation) to the CAA.

The BMFA has made this process as easy as possible: <https://reporting.bmfa.uk/>.

### ADDITIONAL BENEFITS



**Our Authorisation also includes special arrangements for:**

- Trial flights for non-members.
  - Visiting flyers/competitors from overseas.
  - Display flying.
  - Permitting flights above 400ft with aircraft over 7.5Kg
- For further details, please see the full guidance.

### AIRCRAFT LESS THAN 250G



Even if your aircraft is under 250g you still need to register as an Operator if your aircraft has a camera fitted.

Evidence of competency is required to operate within the BMFA's Authorisation.

Alternatively, you may operate within the Open Category requirements - defined in UK Regulation (EU) 2019/947 - for aircraft of less than 250g.

### THE BRITISH MODEL FLYING ASSOCIATION (THE BMFA)



**The BMFA has been working hard for UK model aircraft and drone flyers since 1922.**

Our unbeatable membership benefits for model aircraft and drone flying members include:

- Insurance – a class leading package including £25 million liability cover and £35K personal accident cover.
- Activities and events for members.
- CAA Operator Registration - made easy as part of our membership process.
- The BMFA News emailed out to you 4 times a year (a printed subscription option is available) and access to download the BDF NEWS – for details of everything happening in our wider unmanned aircraft community
- Achievement Scheme – dedicated to raising flying standards and safety whilst making learning fun.
- Access to competition – membership provides access to local, national, and international model flying contests.
- Guidance – we publish an extensive range of guidance material to help members have fun, fly safely, and remain within the law.
- Assistance – our experienced staff are there to help, advise and support whenever required.
- Representation - we represent the model/drone flying community at the highest levels nationally and internationally.

**All this and much more for less than 14p a day!**  
[www.bmfa.org](http://www.bmfa.org)