

Reporting Drone Occurrences

In 2015, there were 198 occurrences involving drones reported to the CAA, but anecdotal evidence suggests there may be many more. So we need you to report these occurrences so we can direct our actions effectively.

The types of occurrences cover a range of activities, such as drones near aircraft and aerodromes, people not flying their drones in a 'neighbourly' manner, and many complaints about being filmed.

While some councils allow drone operations in public places such as parks, others don't. Flying over a public place such as a stadium can be dangerous.

Already this year, we've had reports of unauthorised drones filming events at Baypark Stadium in Tauranga, and many complaints about drones flying over private property. Mike Campbell, Team Leader of CAA Safety Data Management says the reports are definitely a concern.

"But what's really concerning, are reports we've had of drones being operated near an aerodrome, through a flight path, and within controlled airspace.

"This could so easily end tragically if a drone and aircraft collide. We're very fortunate it hasn't happened yet."

Why Notify?

"Often it's hard to know who the operator is, as drones aren't registered, and you may not see who's operating them," says Mark Houston, Flight Senior Technical Specialist, Unmanned Aircraft and Recreational Aviation.

"However, we still want to be notified about any occurrences.

"Drones are now prolific. We can't be everywhere at once, so we need to know about drone occurrences to know where to focus our attention."

In cases where there is enough information or a public concern, the CAA does investigate and can take action.

"Our number one aim is safety, so where we investigate and find an operator in breach of the rules, we like to take an education-first approach," says Mark.

"Usually it's a case that people don't know the rules and once they do, they're happy to comply.

"But if that doesn't work, or it's a more serious occurrence, then we may look at further action, including prosecution."

How Do I Notify?

You can report drone occurrence online, www.caa.govt.nz/report. It's quick and easy, and allows the CAA to know where to focus our education efforts.

The drone community will continue to grow and become an important part of the aviation landscape. We want to ensure that every aviation participant is safe. ■

Drones?

We've been calling them drones because this seems to be the term most commonly used at present. Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems or RPAS is the official International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) term for such aircraft. They have also been known as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS).

