



I want to fly a multicopter: what are the applicable regulations?

I have purchased a drone with a camera from a department store. What do I have to do next?

It is advisable to take the time to study the operating instructions and fully acquaint yourself with the model you have purchased. You should carry out your first flights on open ground where there is no risk of harming people or animals. Remember: drones are not toys! Their improper use could result in harm to others!

I've learnt how to use my drone. May I now fly it in the neighbourhood and film my house?

In principle, yes. Remote controlled drones do not need a permit if they weigh less than 30 kilograms and the "pilot" operates it in direct eye contact. These requirements apply to almost all drones intended for non-commercial use that can be purchased in a department store or on the Internet. But in residential zones in particular, it is essential to observe the rules governing protection of privacy. People do not appreciate drones hovering above their home! It is best to operate your multicopter where you won't disturb anyone. You should also bear the fact in mind that some cantons or municipalities may impose further-reaching restrictions.

I would like to use my drone to film nature and landscapes. Is this permitted?

In principle, yes. You do not need a permit from the FOCA as long as you operate the drone in direct eye contact. Here, too, you must observe the principle of protection of privacy and take care of the environment, e.g. avoid bird sanctuaries, etc. Filming above military installations is prohibited.

Am I allowed to operate my multicopter everywhere and fly it as high as I want?

No, it's not quite as simple as that. The applicable legislation stipulates that it is prohibited to operate model aircraft and drones within a radius of 5 kilometres from civil and military airfields and airports without the prior consent of the airfield manager or Skyguide (air traffic control). In addition, a control zone (CTR) with a larger radius than 5 kilometres exists around every large airport. Within this control zone, drones and model aircraft may only fly to an altitude of 150 metres above ground level.

Outside these zones, the fact should be borne in mind that other aircraft or helicopters with people on board could be encountered at an altitude of 150 metres above the ground in unpopulated terrain, and 300 metres above the ground in populated areas. It is practically impossible for these aircraft to spot a drone or model aircraft in good time and take the necessary measures to avoid it.

The geofencing functionality prevents my DJI drone to fly where it's forbidden: I don't have to worry about restricted areas.

Using the geofencing functionality, some manufacturers prevent the drone to fly in specific areas. However, these areas might be different from the ones defined by the national authorities. It is therefore the responsibility of the pilot to be aware of local flight restrictions before operating a drone. In order to fly into an area for which the manufacturer has programmed a restriction, an "unlock" is necessary: in this case please take note of [the corresponding information](#).

Video goggles are now available that enable me to directly see what my camera is recording live. Is this permitted?

No, a special permit has to be obtained from the FOCA for this purpose. Without this permit, if you operate a drone beyond direct eye contact you will be committing an offence. However, operating a drone with video goggles is permitted if the device remains within direct eye contact and you are accompanied by a second "pilot" who is able to take control of it at any time. In the new category of First Person View (FPV) racing, contests take place at very low altitude, which means they do not represent a risk to other aircraft.

Am I allowed to use my autonomously flying drone in Switzerland?

There is no legislation prohibiting the use of autonomously flying drones in Switzerland. However, these devices must always remain in direct eye contact and the operator must be able to intervene and land the drone in the event of a problem. In addition, a number of regulations have to be observed when using these new types of drone:

- Drones weighing more than 500 grams may not be flown above gatherings of people.
- The operator must always keep the drone in direct eye contact. This means that activities such as the popular "pursuit" racing are only permitted if a second person maintains eye contact with the drone and is able to intervene if a problem should arise.

Here, too, the principle of common sense applies: drones must never be allowed to endanger people or animals. On heavily frequented ski slopes, a helmet camera is still the most suitable option. If you are on your own or in a small group, it's OK to use an autonomously flying ("selfie") drone. But better still, why not enjoy the peace and beauty of the countryside without electronic gadgets?

My brother is getting married next week: I would like to film the wedding party from above. Is this permitted?

No. Following the entry into force of the revised legislation on 1 August 2014, a permit is required for flying a drone above gatherings of people, e.g. parties, processions, sporting events. Even if a drone is equipped with a GPS device in addition to remote control, it can still get out of control and endanger other people. Unless you hold a permit, you are only allowed to operate a drone at a distance of at least 100 metres from a gathering of people.

As a specialist in architecture photography, I have already been using a drone for quite some time. Am I allowed to do this without a permit from the FOCA?

Yes, as long as you do not operate it near gatherings of people and keep it in direct eye contact. However, some cantons and municipalities impose more restrictive regulations based on the DETEC Ordinance on Special Categories of Aircraft. It is also advisable to contact any involved property owners or the local authorities in advance.

What happens if my multicopter crashes and causes damage, even though I have taken all necessary precautions?

Before you fly your multicopter for the first time, you have to ensure that your liability insurance covers any damage amounting to at least 1 million Swiss francs. This applies to all drones and model aircraft weighing more than 500 grams. Use your multicopter responsibly, do not operate it at low altitudes above people or animals, and always remember that your hobby could disturb other people.

My drone weighs less than 500 grams. Does that mean that I can use it without any restrictions?

No. Regulations also apply to the operation of lightweight drones. Although you may in principle fly your drone anywhere other than in the nature conservation zones depicted on the special FOCA map of restricted areas (RPAS Map), you still have to observe certain basic rules. You must maintain eye contact with your drone at all times and observe the principle of protection of privacy. Although you are allowed to operate your drone above gatherings of people, if you cause an accident you will be liable for any resulting damage. In the case of lightweight drones too, the operator is always responsible for their safe use.

If you have any questions or require further information, you can contact us by e-mail or via the following website:

<https://www.bazl.admin.ch/rpas>

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