FAA Clarifies Educational Use of Drones

May 09, 2016

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Until recently, schools could not allow their students to fly drones for educational purposes without going through the costly and time consuming process of obtaining specific Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval. On May 4, the FAA released a memorandum clarifying the educational use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems.

The bottom line is that the following activities are now permitted under hobby or recreational guidelines (that is, no 333 commercial use exemption, no pilot's certificate, and no need to obtain a certificate of authorization or waiver):

- Flights at educational institutions and community sponsored events as long as the operator is not compensated.
- Flight by students in furtherance of aviation related education at an accredited educational institution.
- Assistance of students by faculty teaching aviation related courses at accredited educational institutions, provided the student maintains operational control.

Bear in mind that the above operations require compliance with the existing model or recreational guidelines. That is, they must operate in accordance with community guidelines, not interfere with manned aircraft, and operators must give prior notice when within five miles of an airport.

For additional guidance regarding this interpretation as well as assistance in setting up a UAS program, please contact James Mackler in Frost Brown Todd's Regulated Business Practice Group.

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