

Supplementary Instruction (SI)

CAP 493 MATS Part 1

Safety and Airspace Regulation Group

Intelligence, Strategy and Policy



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AIRPROX Involving Small Unmanned Aircraft

1 Introduction

- 1.1 A marked increase in the number of AIRPROX reports involving small unmanned aircraft (more generally referred to as 'drones') has occurred recently. A common theme through these recent reports is that the encounters have been reported at altitudes above 1,500 feet, which is in almost all cases well beyond a height that the person flying the 'drone' will be able to maintain visual contact with it, and the airspace around it.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Supplementary Instruction is to amend the AIRPROX reporting procedure within CAP 493 - Manual of Air Traffic Services Part 1 when an AIRPROX report involving a small unmanned aircraft is reported to ATC.

2 Background

- 2.1 A small unmanned aircraft is defined within the Air Navigation Order (ANO) as 'any unmanned aircraft, other than a balloon or a kite, having a mass of not more than 20 kg without its fuel but including any articles or equipment installed in or attached to the aircraft at the commencement of its flight.' This definition is all encompassing and includes traditional 'model aircraft' as well as the newer 'multicopter' types, whether they are being used recreationally or for commercial purposes. Small unmanned aircraft operations are specifically regulated by ANO 2009 articles 166 and 167; however, ANO 2009 article 138 (endangerment) also applies.
- 2.2 Because of their relatively simple nature, unless specific approval has been given, a small unmanned aircraft must always be operated within the direct visual contact of the person flying it so that they can avoid collisions with other aircraft. ANO 2009 article 166(3) specifically states:

'The person in charge of a small unmanned aircraft must maintain direct, unaided visual contact with the aircraft sufficient to monitor its flight path in relation to other aircraft, persons, vehicles, vessels and structures for the purpose of avoiding collisions.'
- 2.3 Unlike manned aviation, tracing the person in charge of small unmanned aircraft is extremely challenging, due to their remoteness from the aircraft itself. Therefore, speed of reporting is essential so that the operator can be located, particularly if it is likely that the aircraft is being operated in a manner that is likely to endanger others (e.g. in close proximity to another aircraft and/or at an excessive height). In order to achieve this, Air Traffic Service Units receiving an AIRPROX report involving what is

thought likely to be a small unmanned aircraft must inform the Civil Police as soon as practicable.

3 Revised MATS Part 1 Procedures

- 3.1 With immediate effect, CAP 493 is amended as shown at [Appendix A](#).
- 3.2 This change will be incorporated into CAP 493, Edition 6 at Amendment 2 in due course.

4 Queries

- 4.1 Any queries or further guidance required on the content of this SI should be addressed to:

ATS Enquiries
Intelligence, Strategy and Policy
CAA Safety and Airspace Regulation Group
2W Aviation House
Gatwick Airport South
West Sussex
RH6 0YR

E-mail: ats.enquiries@caa.co.uk

- 4.2 Any queries relating to the availability of this SI should be addressed to:

ATS Documents
Intelligence, Strategy and Policy
CAA Safety and Airspace Regulation Group
2W Aviation House
Gatwick Airport South
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E-mail: ats.documents@caa.co.uk

5 Cancellation

- 5.1 This SI shall remain in force until incorporated into CAP 493 or it is revoked, suspended or amended.