



Civil Aviation Authority Information Notice Number: IN-2015/085



Issued: 10 September 2015

Reporting of Unnotified Small Unmanned Aircraft (SUA) Activity

This Information Notice contains information that is for guidance and/or awareness.

Recipients are asked to ensure that this Information Notice is copied to all members of their staff who may have an interest in the information (including any 'in-house' or contracted maintenance organisations and relevant outside contractors).

Applicability:	
Aerodromes:	All Aerodrome Operators
Air Traffic:	All ATS
Airspace:	Not Primarily Affected
Airworthiness:	Not Primarily Affected
Flight Operations:	All General Aviation Pilots and AOC Holders
Licensed/Unlicensed Personnel:	All ATCO and all Pilots

1 Introduction

- 1.1 'Small Unmanned Aircraft (SUA)' as defined in Air Navigation Order 2009 (ANO) Article 255 'Interpretation' means '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'. ANO Article 166 'Small Unmanned Aircraft' lays down regulations concerning the operation of SUAs. Article 166(3) requires the person in charge of an SUA to 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'.
- 1.2 There has been a marked increase in the number of AIRPROX involving SUAs where such activity has occurred within controlled airspace but without prior notification to ATC, or the SUA activity has occurred at heights of more than 400 feet above the surface. A common theme through these reports is that the SUA encounters have been reported at altitudes above 1500ft. SUA operations at such an altitude is generally beyond the height at which the person in charge of an SUA will be able to maintain meaningful visual contact with it whilst maintaining an awareness of the airspace around it.
- 1.3 Due to the random nature of such SUA sightings and the fact that the SUA will not normally be tracked on radar, their unknown flight duration and the potential for inaccuracies within the sighting report, the provision of traffic avoidance advice to aircraft can be problematic. As a controller can only become aware of non-controlled SUA activity when they or another controller, a pilot or vigilant and concerned third party observes and reports SUA activity,

information obtained from these sighting reports will form the basis of a controller's traffic provision of information regarding such sightings to potentially affected pilots.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This Information Notice (IN) details the phraseology that should be used in the event of unnotified SUA activity being reported.
- 2.2 Any reports of unnotified SUA activity should follow a format similar to that used for activities such as bird reports or windshear and that ATC should use the descriptor of the SUA as provided by the individual making the report. Furthermore, in the absence of updated information (including confirmation of the cessation of such activity), any such reports should continue for up to 30 minutes after the initial report. This follows the precedent associated with bird or windshear reports, and is coincidentally the typical maximum useable battery life of SUAs.
- 2.3 The recommended phraseology to be used is at [Appendix 1](#).

3 Commonly Used Terms

- 3.1 There are various commonly used descriptions for SUA. These include (but are not limited to), 'drone', model aircraft, Remotely Piloted Aircraft/RPA, Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems/ RPAS, Small Unmanned Aircraft/SUA, Unmanned Aircraft/UA, Unmanned Aircraft System(s)/UAS and, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle/UAV.
- 3.2 Each are defined in CAP 722 'Unmanned Aircraft System Operations in UK Airspace – Guidance', except for:
 - a. 'Drone'. EASA A-NPA 2015-10 'Introduction of a regulatory framework for the operation of drones' proposes that 'drone' shall mean 'an aircraft without a human pilot on board, whose flight is controlled either autonomously or under the remote control of a pilot on the ground or in another vehicle.'
 - b. 'Model aircraft'. The term is defined in CAP 658 'Model Aircraft: A Guide to Safe Flying' as meaning as any 'Small Unmanned Aircraft (SUA)' (0-20 kg) used for sporting and recreational purposes and a 'large model aircraft' is defined as any 'Unmanned Aircraft' (over 20 kg) used for sporting and recreational purposes.
 - c. 'Unmanned Aerial Vehicle/UAV' is not defined, however the term has the same meaning as an Unmanned Aircraft or a Drone.

4 Queries

- 4.1 Any queries or requests for further guidance as a result of this communication should be addressed to:

Intelligence, Strategy and Policy (ISP)
Safety & Airspace Regulation Group
Aviation House
Gatwick Airport South
West Sussex
RH6 0YR

E-mail: ISPOperationsManagementTeam@caa.co.uk

5 Cancellation

- 5.1 This Information Notice will remain in force until 10 December 2015, when CAP 413 Edition 21 Amendment 6 (published 6 November 2015) takes effect.