

Policy

Policy Number:

PO1003

Policy Title:

Drones

Applicability:

All RNLI staff and volunteers, as well as visitors to RNLI locations.

Reason for Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that drone operations carried out by, or on behalf of, the RNLI is undertaken safely and in accordance with regulatory requirements and current good practice. This policy provides clear direction on the use of drones at RNLI lifeboat stations and other RNLI properties (such as RNLI shops and museums) and in the vicinity of RNLI assets including lifeguard units, lifeboats and people.

Objective of Policy:

To increase the safety of those operating and in the vicinity of drones as well as ensuring legal compliance.

Policy:**1. DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of this policy,

- 1.1 Aerial work:** the use of drones to directly benefit the RNLI (e.g. the collection of images and video for the use in RNLI campaigns, etc.).
- 1.2 Permission:** means the action of authorisation by the relevant aviation authority or RNLI policy guardian.
- 1.3 RNLI policy guardian:** refers to a staff member who will coordinate, assess, and authorise requests from RNLI staff and volunteers to use drones. See "RNLI policy guardians" in section 4.0 for further information on the responsibilities of this position.

2. POLICY INTRODUCTION

- 2.1** The RNLI has experienced an increasing demand for the use of drones – from surveying lifeboat stations to filming events - and recognises both the risks and opportunities the technology offers.
- 2.2** Drones are now widely available for commercial and recreational use. They can however cause injury or damage if they are not used responsibly and so are subject to safety rules, which are underpinned by legislation.

2.3 Other terms used to describe the technology include, but are not limited to:

- Remotely piloted aerial or aircraft systems (RPAS)
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV)
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)
- Small Unmanned Aircraft (SUA)
- Quad-copter

For the purpose of clarity we have referred to the above technologies as drones throughout this policy.

3. POLICY

3.1 Drones may ONLY be used when ALL of the following conditions are met:

3.2 All drone activity must comply with the regulatory requirements set out by the relevant aviation authority:

- [Civil Aviation Authority](#) - United Kingdom and Northern Ireland
- [Irish Aviation Authority](#) - Ireland
- [Civil Aviation Administration](#) - Isle of Man
- [Director of Civil Aviation](#) - Guernsey
- [Director of Civil Aviation](#) - Jersey

3.3 Each use of drones by or on behalf of the RNLI must be authorised by a RNLI policy guardian (see "RNLI policy guardians" section 4.0).

3.4 Aerial work involving film/photography of RNLI assets and locations must only be undertaken by either:

- RNLI staff/volunteers who fulfil the competency criteria as set out by the relevant aviation authority (in 3.2 above) AND are authorised as a pilot by the RNLI, or
- approved contractors.

The RNLI policy guardians (see "RNLI policy guardians") manage the list of authorised pilots/approved contractors.

3.5 The use of drones is not permitted on, over or within 50 metres of RNLI properties, equipment, or people in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man or within 30 metres in Ireland.

If a requirement for drones involves aerial/commercial work outside of the limits set by the relevant aviation authority, then a RNLI policy guardian must be notified so they can seek additional permission from the appropriate aviation authority.

3.6 Examples of aerial/commercial work which would require additional permissions include operating a drone:

- at a height of more than 120 metres above the ground/surface in the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Ireland
- fitted with a camera within 50 metres of people, vehicles, buildings or structures in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man or within 30 metres in Ireland
- over an assembly of people or a congested area in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Ireland.

- 3.7** Under legislation, the general public is not permitted to use drones on, over or within 50 metres of RNLI properties, equipment, or people in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man or within 30 metres in Ireland.
- 3.8** If RNLI staff and volunteers witness a drone being operated illegally, outside of the boundaries set by the relevant aviation authority at or in proximity to RNLI properties, lifeboats or people, please contact the local police and notify the duty officer on 08451 668 222 who can then inform the relevant persons. Additionally, file an incident report on the RNLI Accident Database. To access the database please log in to [RNLI2](#) and click on the Accident Database button.

4. RNLI POLICY GUARDIANS

- 4.1** In order to provide necessary governance and control to the RNLI employment of drones, RNLI policy guardians have been established. The RNLI policy guardians will:
- approve requests for drone use by or on behalf of the RNLI
 - hold the list of RNLI Authorised Operators for drones, including RNLI staff, volunteers and contractors
 - apply for additional permissions as required for aerial/commercial work outside of the limits set by the relevant aviation authority for operating drones
 - advise on how RNLI staff and volunteers can become competent as a pilot of drones and subsequently how/whether they can be added to the RNLI Authorised Operators list.
- 4.2** The RNLI policy guardians can be contacted at drones@RNLI.org.uk. Clearly state the purpose of the drone request, in the email subject line so that the query can be processed efficiently.

5. BECOMING AN AUTHORISED OPERATOR

- 5.1** Competent RNLI staff and volunteers can apply to be added as a pilot to the RNLI list of Authorised Operators held by the RNLI policy guardians. However, RNLI staff and volunteers **MUST NOT** fly drones for RNLI business or over RNLI property, before competency is achieved and without the permission of a RNLI policy guardian.
- 5.2** RNLI staff or volunteers who wish to train as operators and fly drones on behalf of the RNLI should speak to an RNLI policy guardian.
- 5.3** Pilot licences for drones do not currently exist. For "aerial work" in the United Kingdom, the CAA requires operators to demonstrate competence before a "Permission" to fly is granted.
- 5.4** In the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, the person in charge of a drone must not fly the aircraft for the purposes of aerial work unless granted a permission granted by the Office for the Director of Civil Aviation in the Channel Islands or the Civil Aviation Administration for the Isle of Man.
- 5.5** In Ireland, permission is not required from the IAA to use a drone commercially within the limits of the Order; however the IAA does recommend that operators undertake a course of safety training.

6. FILM AND IMAGE

- 6.1** Aerial work that captures images and/or sound must adhere to RNLI [Social Media](#) and [Film and Image](#) policies.

7. SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

- 7.1** Any person operating a drone on behalf of the RNLI must act in accordance with the RNLI's [Safety, Health and Environment \(SHE\) policy](#) and not put others at risk. Special attention must be given to the requirement for a comprehensive local risk assessment.

In order to authorise a drone request the policy guardian must have first received a flight plan and/or written method statement for how the flight will be managed.

- 7.2** In addition to the [RNLI SHE policy](#), it is advised that 'RNLI staff/volunteers' are present to support the aircraft operator. Their responsibility is to monitor the environment, in the air and on the ground/sea, and keep the pilot informed and free to focus on the flight.

- 7.3** There is a risk of explosion/fire during the charging and storage of drone batteries which are mostly Lithium Polymer (LiPo) powered. Drone batteries should not be stored or charged at RNLI locations unless prior permission is sought from the RNLI policy guardians and a risk assessment is completed.

8. INSURANCE & PROCUREMENT

- 8.1** Contractors, staff and volunteers that have been approved by the policy guardians to operate drones on behalf of the RNLI must have appropriate and specific aviation insurance cover.

- 8.2** No RNLI funds must be used for the purchase of a drone without the express permission of a policy guardian and the relevant director. Where approval is given, new purchases must go through the RNLI procurement process.

- 8.3** Once purchased, but before use, RNLI policy guardians must inform the Insurance, Compliance and Governance teams to establish necessary insurance cover.

Reference Documents:

Aviation authorities:
[Civil Aviation Authority](#) - United Kingdom and NI
[Irish Aviation Authority](#) - Ireland
[Civil Aviation Administration](#) - Isle of Man
[Director of Civil Aviation](#) - Guernsey
[Director of Civil Aviation](#) - Jersey

Related Policies, Procedures & Guidance:

Related Forms & Instructions: