



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY™

OP 79.11: UNCREWED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS/MODEL AIRCRAFT

PURPOSE

Mississippi State University (MSU) is one of the leading Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) research universities in the nation. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that MSU and the MSU community operate UAS and Model Aircraft safely, ethically, and consistently with applicable Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) laws and University policies and procedures.

POLICY

This policy establishes general guidelines for the operation of uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) and model remote controlled (RC) aircraft on Mississippi State University properties to ensure compliance with **Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations (specifically the FAA's Small Uncrewed Aircraft Regulations Part 107)**, local regulations, and for the purpose of ensuring campus safety and security. Additionally, the policy defines the limitations, use, and enforcement of other related university policies and procedures.

I. General

- a. When operating (flying) an UAS on and over Mississippi State University owned properties, it is the sole responsibility of the operator (pilot) to adhere to all **FAA regulations and local laws**.
 - i. This includes, but is not limited to, FAA airmen certificate requirements, conditions of any airworthiness certificates, state laws governing the safe operation of aircraft, and University policies regarding access to campus.
- b. Final approval for flight operations will be granted by the Office of the VP for Research and Economic Development (ORED) or the Office of the VP for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine (DAFVM). The ORED is responsible for approving flight operations over all non-DAFVM areas owned/leased by Mississippi State University.
- c. Persons not affiliated with MSU as either employees, students, or affiliates, must also secure approval to fly and follow this policy. In addition, the person or legal entity they are associated with must **sign a written agreement** holding the University harmless for any resulting claims, loss, or damage from flight operations, and evidence of at least \$2 million of insurance covering the UAS operations. A hold harmless template can be found on the [UAS Flight Request webpage](#). Vendors must list MSU as an additional insured party/entity on their insurance policy. The language for this agreement must be submitted along with the [UAS Request Form](#).

- d. Operation of any UAS on any University property or at any University-sponsored event is prohibited unless first approved by submitting a UAS Flight Request found on the website. (<https://www.raspet.msstate.edu/uas-flight-requests>)
- e. Recreational and/or hobbyist UAS operations are prohibited on and over MSU properties.
- f. UAS operations over or near the MSU Drill Field, Junction, academic or administrative buildings, residence halls, and athletic facilities will not normally be approved.
- g. Any individual or organization found to be operating a UAS on University property or at a university-sponsored event in violation of their FAA-approved status, or any federal, state, and local laws or regulations, or in violation of applicable University policies, may be directed by authorized University representatives to cease operation of the UAS immediately unless or until approval is obtained. Violations will be referred to the appropriate University disciplinary process and will be considered regarding future UAS requests.
- h. The operation of UAS by the MSU Police Department and/or other authorized safety response personnel may be exempt from this policy based on the determination of emergency needs. During such operations, the MSU Police Department will follow internal department protocols, as well as all FAA, federal, state, and local laws or regulations.
- i. In the event of a safety incident resulting in bodily injury or property damage, UAS operations must immediately cease and the incident must be immediately reported to the MSU police and the appropriate VP. If a safety incident results in significant bodily injury or harm the operator shall first call 911 before reporting the incident to the appropriate VP.

II. Procedures for Obtaining UAS Flight Approval

- a. Securing approval for and operating a UAS, whether for educational, research, or commercial purposes.
 - i. Individuals or organizations seeking to operate a UAS on University property or at a university-sponsored event must submit a completed [UAS Request Form](#) three weeks in advance of the intended operation.
 - ii. Depending on the request, approvals are granted by the Office of the VP for Research and Economic Development or the Office of the VP for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine. The respective Vice President's may delegate approval.
 - iii. The assigned VP office will review the application, notify and discuss any changes required among relevant parties and may request changes of the

applicant. Once approved or denied, the VP office or designee will notify the applicant.

- iv. If approved, the operator must have copies of all relevant FAA documentation and the approved UAS Request Form in their possession at all times during flight activities. These documents must be readily presented upon request to any University official or representative with control or jurisdiction over the activity or location.

III. Accountability

- a. The Mississippi State University Police Department is the operational monitoring and enforcing entity ensuring UAS activities are approved and executed safely. Safety is paramount for all MSU-affiliated UAS operations. All UAS flight crew personnel are responsible for the safety of their UAS operation(s). FAA Safety information can be readily accessed at <https://www.faasafety.gov/>.
- b. Individuals violating this policy will be held accountable for their actions, which may include but are not limited to:
 - i. Non-MSU employees or students are subject to loss of privileges to operate on any MSU property.
 - ii. Students are subject to the Code of Student Conduct.
 - iii. Other legal entities may be prohibited from future operations on MSU property.
 - iv. Faculty, staff, and student employees are subject to corrective action, up to and including termination of employment.
- c. The University is not responsible for any damage from a UAS resulting from non-authorized MSU employees. The operator will be responsible for any property damage or losses resulting from the operation of a UAS.
- d. The Vice President of Research and Economic Development and the Vice President of the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine are jointly responsible for management, administrative oversight, and decisions pertaining to this policy. The Vice Presidents shall appoint an UAS Advisory Committee. The Committee shall meet annually unless otherwise requested.

IV. Definitions

Emergency

An urgent situation where action is taken to promote the safety and security of persons and/or property.

University property

Any land, grounds, buildings, or facilities owned, leased, or used by Mississippi State University per formal contractual or legal agreements. Also included are University-owned streets, sidewalks, and bike paths.

University-sponsored event

Any Mississippi State University sanctioned, hosted, or controlled event, including but not limited to student academic meetings, athletic events, and University promotional gatherings. Activities or events sponsored by Independent Student Organizations do not fall within this definition.

Uncrewed aircraft system (UAS)

Any remotely operated or controlled aircraft intended to fly within the National Airspace System or inside of university owned or controlled buildings. This includes all forms of aircraft, including model, RC, and devices commonly referred to as "drones," as well as communications, support, and navigational equipment. FAA regulations apply to all types of UAS regardless of weight or size.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every four years, or whenever circumstances require an earlier review, by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, the Vice President for Agriculture, Forestry & Veterinary Medicine, and the Provost & Executive Vice President.

REVIEWED BY:

<u>/s/ Julie Jordan</u>	<u>04/01/2025</u>
Vice President, Research and Economic Development	Date

<u>/s/ Keith Coble</u>	<u>06/11/2025</u>
Vice President, Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine	Date

<u>/s/ David Shaw</u>	<u>04/15/2025</u>
Provost and Executive Vice President	Date

<u>/s/ Tracey N. Baham</u>	<u>04/15/2025</u>
Associate Vice President, Institutional Strategy & Effectiveness	Date

<u>/s/ Joan Lucas</u>	<u>06/13/2025</u>
General Counsel	Date

APPROVED BY:

<u>/s/ Mark E. Keenum</u>	<u>07/28/2025</u>
President	Date