

DRONING ON

Remote control drones have become popular over the last few years. What started as a very expensive activity only four years ago has now become as affordable as a cheap digital camera.

And it is usually because of the camera on drones that they have become the next 'must have' item on shopping lists. For a modest outlay, anybody can now get the most amazing aerial photos and video that not too long ago would have required a helicopter.

Some recent media reports and letters to the editor in metropolitan newspapers have claimed that drones are an invasion of privacy and are being used to 'spy' on people, or even check out what's in your back yard that may be worth stealing. Some of these reports feel a bit exaggerated, but there is one

aspect of the recent increase in recreational drones in our skies that is of very real concern.

Recently there have been drone videos posted on social media showing Karangahake Gorge, Waihi Beach and even a flight down Seddon Street during Beach Hop above crowds of people.

One recent posting on social media showing video of Waihi town was clearly well above 400 feet. Our staff estimate it to have been at a height of least 1500 feet. That's a real worry for us as we regularly have helicopters flying in the Waihi area. That puts a recreational drone and an aircraft in the same airspace. The helicopter pilot is in radio contact with Tauranga. The drone pilot has no communication, despite being in control of what is legally an aircraft. That is why the height limit for drones is 400 feet. 'Vertical separation' is really important.

Recently we have had a drone flying across company-owned land and over an exploration drill rig. We did not give permission for the craft to fly over our property. The real danger here is that the drone has the potential to distract people working on the rig and cause an accident.



There are some simple rules regarding the use of small drones. These craft have become very useful in a number of industries and are also used by members of the public.

KEEPING EACH OTHER SAFE

The rules are there for a reason.

There are examples of drones falling out of the sky. There are also reports of aircraft/drone 'interactions' and near misses. If we are going to avoid increased regulation, as has happened in some countries, we need to make sure we are keeping each other safe. The best way to do that is for every drone pilot to follow a few simple rules from CAA and the local council in your area.

Things every drone pilot NEEDS TO KNOW

If you operate a drone it is your responsibility to abide by the rules which came into force in August 2015. These include:

- No flights above 400 feet (that's about 120 metres)
- You must be able to see your drone with your naked eye at all times
- No flying at night
- No flying over people or private property without permission
- No flying in restricted airspace (such as around airports and airstrips)

In addition, you are not allowed within 100 metres of a structure (like a building or a bridge) or below the height of the structure.

Ignorance is no defence. If you intend to fly a drone, you need to know the rules and regulations governing your activities. It may look like a toy, but in law you are the 'pilot in command' of an aircraft.



OceanaGold's tailings impoundments from 400 feet. This is the maximum allowable height for a drone.

Hauraki District

Drone operators are permitted to fly their craft over council parks and reserves, with the exception of council cemeteries, but to do so you must apply to the Hauraki District Council Parks and Reserves Manager. You are not allowed to fly over roads.

Applications require the provision of the operators'

details and a signatory on a disclaimer stating that the operator will abide by the conditions set out in the guidelines. The application form can be found here:

www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz/assets/services_documents/RPAS_Application_to_fly.pdf

Western Bay of Plenty

Western Bay of Plenty District Council permits the use of drones on council-owned land. You are still required to abide by the CAA rules, this includes gaining the consent of any person your craft may fly over. The council website has a list of places it suggests are suitable for drone flights.

ON THE WEB www.airshare.co.nz/rules • www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz/services/parks-reserves/rpas-drones
www.westernbay.govt.nz/our-facilities/parks-walks-camping/Pages/Drone-use-in-the-Western-Bay.aspx