



THE GAME OF DRONES

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER:

SCENARIO

Dion is a professional nature photographer and has recently expanded his work to include footage of weddings and documentaries. He thought that if he combined his camera with his son's toy drone, he would attract more work. There is just one problem with this idea - he is unaware of the drone laws that surround the words "commercial gain". He earns a profit from this idea, which means he is no longer piloting the drone for private use.

Welcome to a new series of short articles entitled the Game of Drones in which we will be navigating through a particular topic or issue dealing with the use of drones.

The drone industry is gaining momentum to hopefully take flight and influence our economy and the way of life in South Africa. The potential for private and commercial applications are endless!

Without drone-ing on, here are some of the major differences between private use and commercial use

of drones, and what is required of the pilot/operator:

PRIVATE USE OF DRONES:

- Maximum take-off weight below 7kg.
- May only fly in daylight.
- Clear weather conditions only.
- Restricted visual line of sight: operate within 500m of the remote pilot and 300m from the nearest object in an open space.
- Maximum height of operation is 120m.
- Must not operate within 10km radius of any aerodrome.
- Must not operate within 50m of any person, road or property.
- Not allowed to operate within controlled, restricted or prohibited airspace.
- Only for private purposes.

COMMERCIAL USE OF DRONES:

- Take-off weight may be over 7kg (unlimited weight).
- Drone is used for commercial gain, interest or outcome.
- Must register with the Civil Aviation Authority.
- Must be operated by duly qualified and licensed pilots.
- Pilots must be over the age of 18 and hold a level 3 medical certificate.
- Theoretical examination, skill tests and flight training from a duly authorised body is required.
- Must have third party liability insurance minimum of R500,000.00 per drone.

REQUIREMENTS TO OPERATE A COMMERCIAL DRONE LEGALLY

Obtaining a license to operate a drone for commercial, corporate or non-profit use is an arduous and expensive procedure, often riddled with obstacles that require a repetitive waltz between the Civil Aviation Authority officials and the pilot/operator. These are the requirements:

1. Obtaining a letter of approval from the Director of the Civil Aviation Authority (valid 12 months from date of issue).
2. Applying for a certificate of registration for each drone.
3. Applying for an operating certificate ~ includes creating an operations manual and a procedure to regularly check personnel's certificates before handling the drone.

4. Submit a maintenance program for approval by the Director of the Civil Aviation Authority (follow manufacturer's instructions for maintenance of the drones).

An audit will be held by officials of the Civil Aviation Authority. The officials will inspect all paperwork, licenses, certificates, programs, etc. as well as question your knowledge on Part 101 of the Civil Aviation Regulations which deals with Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems.

If you have any questions regarding any Drone laws and regulations, please get in touch with us.

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