



Drone Registration Requirement: Here's What You Need to Know

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Drones have quickly become popular and their use has rapidly expanded throughout the U.S. They are a trendy piece of tech hardware with a variety of uses ranging from recreational, commercial, governmental and of course, agricultural.

On December 12, 2017, President Trump signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 which allows the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to require the registration of drones.

The FAA's interest in keeping track of drones and their owners has to do with (i) keeping the public safe, (ii) protecting individuals' privacy rights, and (iii) ensuring national security.

With that in mind, below is a comprehensive guide to registering your drone.

How much does your drone weigh?

If your drone weighs less than 0.55 pounds, **you do not need to register it.**

If your drone weighs between 0.55 pounds and 55 pounds, **you need to register your drone** with the FAA.

You can quickly register online here. The cost is \$5.00 and your registration lasts three years.

If your drone weighs more than 55 pounds, **you need to register your drone** as a traditional aircraft.

A link with more detailed information from the FAA can be found here. As you might expect, this registration process is much more burdensome than for lighter drones.

Are you flying for recreational, commercial or governmental purposes?

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If you are flying for hobby or recreational purposes, you need to register your drone as a “model aircraft” under Section 336.

If you are flying for commercial purposes, you need to register your drone as a “small unmanned aircraft” under Part 107.

You will also need a Remote Pilot Certificate from the FAA. Any government-owned drone, regardless of weight, must be registered as a traditional aircraft under 14 C.F.R. Part 47 or Part 48. You can find more information from the FAA [here](#).

This registration process is more burdensome than that of recreational or commercial drones. Reach out to an attorney if you need assistance navigating the process.

After registration

Once registered, you will receive a certificate with a unique registration number. The FAA requires drone operators to keep the registration certificate nearby when you operate your drone. Also, you must display your registration number on your drone. Use a label or permanent marker.

Before you fly, make sure you are familiar with the operating requirements. There are different requirements for “model aircrafts” and “small unmanned aircrafts.”

Also, make sure you do not fly within five miles of an airport. Read our article on this topic for more information.

Penalties for not registering

If you fail to register your drone, you may face criminal penalties including fines up to \$250,000 and/or jail time up to three years. The FAA may also assess civil penalties up to \$27,000. If you have questions about the steps you need to take to ensure your drone is properly registered, please contact Mike Cassar at 517.371.8110 or at mcassar@fosterswift.com.