

FAA requirements to Fly RC at Bell-Air field

A F.A.Q. and short list of what's needed to fly 'legally.'

(Spoiler: It's not all that hard)

Preamble and Notes:

- This is an informal, unofficial document intended to filter and summarize the current FAA requirements to FLY R/C at the Bell-Air club field for *Recreational* purposes. It contains opinions and may not cover all related information.
- The Full official FAA information is found in FAA AC 91-57C or later revision. [AC 91-57C - Exception for Limited Recreational Operations of Unmanned Aircraft \(faa.gov\)](#)

With the above said, here are the FAQ's:

1. **Q>** Why do I need to deal with the FAA to fly my R/C aircraft?
 - a. **A>** In 2018 Congress passed the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018*, which, among many other things, requires the FAA to oversee model aircraft operations ("Drones" in FAA speak) much more than in the past. It largely applies to commercial operations, i.e., airborne camera ops, but our simple recreational sport flying was swept up in the broad brush to "Regulate Drones".
2. **Q>** I just want to fly my model(s) for fun (recreation) at the club field, what do I need to do?
 - a. **A>** Glad you asked. The list is short, simple, and only costs a few \$.
 - i. Pass a (really simple) on-line test. There are several agencies offering the test **at no cost** (The FAA doesn't do direct testing anymore; they contract it out). One link: [The Recreational UAS Safety Test \(TRUST\) | Federal Aviation Administration \(faa.gov\)](#). Pick one of the providers listed and take the test. **You Can't Fail...**The test just keeps repeating any wrong questions until you pass. Print and save the completed test results- this is your 'License.' Keep it in your wallet and bring it to the field.
 - ii. Register your drone at the FAA Drone Zone [FAADroneZone Access - Home](#)
 1. The Drone Zone covers all UAS (Unmanned Aerial System) operations. Our little corner is the Exception for Limited Recreational Operations of Unmanned Aircraft section. You can mostly disregard the commercial operations parts. As 'pure' recreational pilots, we can register once for multiple models and mark the models as noted in the Drone Zone with the same registration number (commercial 'drones' need one discrete number for each aircraft). The registration cost is \$5, at the time this was written (Jan. 2024).
 2. Note: You will be asked to register a "Device" before you can pay. This section is primarily meant for a GPS equipped aircraft or a remote ID device, but you can register an airplane too. *Only one item is needed!* The AMA Govt Blog has a great

step-by-step how-to-fill-out-for-an-airplane page here: [Update to the FAA DroneZone and Registration & Renewal Process - AMA IN ACTION Advocating for Members \(modelaircraft.org\)](#)

3. Also Note: The registration number must be marked on the **outside** of the aircraft. It doesn't have to be fancy: Printed label, ball point pen on tape, crayon :) .

3. Q> Is that it?

- a. A> Well, mostly. If you are flying in Uncontrolled Airspace (Generally below 400 above the ground and not too near a full-size airport), you will either need to broadcast a **Remote ID** signal (from your fancy GPS enabled quadcopter or a separately purchased module attached to your aircraft) **or** be flying in a “FAA Recognized Identification Area” (FRIA). This will be an enforceable requirement after March 16th, 2024. At this time, few remote ID modules exist on the retail market, however that might change by March 2024.
 - i. **The Bell-Air R/C Flyers field has been approved as a FRIA!** See Bell-Air’s Field Rules document for the FRIA boundaries, but most normal line-of-sight and below 400 feet R/C flying is well within the boundary lines.

4. Q> Well, that sounds do-able so far but what if I need help?

- a. A> The Bell-Air club is dedicated to helping grow our hobby, so most members would be glad to help with any questions. Just ask a Club officer. Or check out the club’s document section from their website (as you’re doing now!).

5. Q> **Anything** else I should know?

- a. The above covers the FAA requirements. As has been the case for many years, flying at the Bell-Air club field requires a club membership and AMA (Academy of Model Aeronautics) membership. This is covered on the club website [Bell-Air RC Flyers \(bellairrcflyers.com\)](#).
- b. One final note: The FAA registration requirements referenced above apply to UAS (models) weighing between .55 pounds (250 Grams) and 55 pounds. Small models under 250 grams are not subject to most of the above rules.