



# UNAUTHORIZED DRONE ACTIVITY OVER SPORTING VENUES



## OVERVIEW

Many professional sporting events are restricting fans from their venues in response to state ordinances that limit public gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent drone sightings prompted game delays at sporting venues in Minneapolis, Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City, highlighting concerns of unauthorized drone activity in the new spectator-restricted environment. Most instances involve fans seeking real-time game footage. However, malicious actors may utilize drones to disrupt, harass, or even cause physical injury or destruction of property. Regardless of intent, unauthorized drone activities pose a potential risk. Sporting venue owners and operators should therefore consider all unauthorized drone activity with caution and plan accordingly.

This resource presents options of consideration for sporting venue owners and operators to prevent, protect from, and respond to unauthorized drone activity.

## PREVENT

**Clear and consistent communication** with your community is vital to preventing unauthorized drone activity around a venue. Members of the community may include, but are not limited to, residents, businesses, fans, and local law enforcement. Consider the following actions when communicating with stakeholders.



**Engage with law enforcement.** Connect with federal, state, and local law enforcement early, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP).<sup>1</sup> Notify them of upcoming events and associated risks. Ask about available tools and resources (messaging, technological systems, etc.), and work together to develop a protection and response plan.



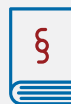
**Connect with the local Protective Security Advisor (PSA).** Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) PSAs are critical infrastructure protection and vulnerability mitigation experts located across the country to conduct assessments, deliver training, and advise on effective ways to enhance security.<sup>2</sup>



**Promote public awareness.** Use social media, television and radio commercial spots, and outreach to local drone user groups, as well as event goers (and fans), to raise public awareness of flight restrictions and how to report unauthorized flight activity.



**Post signage.** Identify potential drone launch points around the venue and post signage that designates these areas as “no drone zones.” The FAA’s free digital toolkit includes No Drone Zone signage for print and web.<sup>3</sup>



**Review laws and regulations.** Determine whether your facility is covered under 14 CFR 99.7, Special Security Instructions, which restricts unauthorized drone operations one hour before and one hour after certain events at stadiums with a seating capacity of 30,000 or more.<sup>4</sup> Additional regulatory options may include:

- **Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs):** TFRs are a type of Notices to Airmen (NOTAM), issued by the FAA, that define an area restricted to air travel due to a hazardous condition, a special event, or a general warning for the entire airspace under their authority.<sup>5</sup> Although a TFR will not counter a drone incursion, it will provide law enforcement the ability to enforce federally mandated flight restrictions. A TFR violation may result in civil penalties and criminal charges.<sup>6</sup> PSAs can assist owners and operators in requesting TFRs for events with a credible drone threat.
- **State and local statutes:** Review state laws, local ordinances/limitations, and private property policies. Laws regarding reckless endangerment, disturbing the peace, and voyeurism may apply to unauthorized drone activity.<sup>7</sup> Incorporate this information into a protection plan and communicate the potential consequences of unauthorized drone activity to the public.

1. For a list of FBI field offices, visit <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/>; for more information about FAA’s LEAP, visit [https://www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/headquarters\\_offices/ash/ash\\_programs/investigations/leap/](https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/ash/ash_programs/investigations/leap/).

2. To learn more about PSAs, visit [cisa.gov/protective-security-advisors](https://www.cisa.gov/protective-security-advisors) or send an email to [Central@cisa.gov](mailto:Central@cisa.gov).

3. “No Drone Zone,” FAA, last modified August 2019, [https://www.faa.gov/uas/resources/community\\_engagement/no\\_drone\\_zone/](https://www.faa.gov/uas/resources/community_engagement/no_drone_zone/).

4. Refer to the full NOTAM here: [https://www.faa.gov/uas/resources/policy\\_library/media/Sports\\_TFR-UAS\\_Handout.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/uas/resources/policy_library/media/Sports_TFR-UAS_Handout.pdf) and connect with federal, state, and local law enforcement to discuss enforcement options.

5. To learn more about TFRs, visit [https://www.faa.gov/pilots/safety/notams\\_tfr/](https://www.faa.gov/pilots/safety/notams_tfr/).

6. For more information about FBI’s potential criminal enforcement actions for violations of national defense airspace, refer to 14 CFR 99.7 and 49 U.S. Code § 46307.

7. To learn more about state drone laws, visit <https://www.ncsl.org/research/transportation/current-unmanned-aircraft-state-law-landscape.aspx>.

## PROTECT

Employ a multi-step security approach to protect the venue from unauthorized drone activity. Identify and prioritize people and assets that require general and/or targeted protection. Develop and disseminate security plans with key stakeholders including event planners, facility security personnel, and law enforcement.



**Conduct a site survey** of the venue and surrounding area, taking note of critical assets, nearby property types, potential drone launch points (open or elevated areas such as parking lots or balconies), and options for positioning detection equipment. Identify “risk zones” and “render safe” landing zones based on proximity to protected assets, and as determined by law enforcement, Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT), bomb squad teams, and/or Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams for UAS carrying suspicious payloads. Use the survey to determine your response posture for each zone.



**Identify drone detection resources.** Connect with law enforcement to learn about mobile drone detection support. For those considering investing in a drone detection system, consulting legal counsel and conducting a thorough legal analysis with attention to both federal and state criminal, surveillance, and communications laws is vital.<sup>8</sup>



**Update security plans.** Incorporate drone response actions into security and emergency response plans. Ensure that all venue personnel are familiar with the drone and emergency response plans.



**Provide training and exercises on recognizing suspicious indicators.** Train personnel on how to identify and report unauthorized activity, and exercise these trainings to identify potential areas for improvement.<sup>9</sup> Consider how the drone is flying in the context of FAA regulations. The following actions may indicate suspicious drone activity:

- **Violation of FAA regulations**, such as:
  - Flying over 400 ft. above ground level;
  - Flying over people or moving vehicles;
  - Flying beyond the drone operator’s visual line of sight; or
  - Flying at speeds over 100 mph.<sup>10</sup>
- **Suspicious payloads or modifications to the drone**, such as:
  - Oddly shaped items, weapons, or contraband;
  - Excessive tape used to conceal or attach additional items;
  - Additional visible batteries attached;
  - Lights taped over or removed; or
  - Visible loose wires.
- **Obstructed or unidentifiable registration**

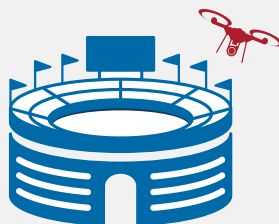
## RESPOND

Activate the venue’s drone response plans and communicate with security personnel, game officials, and law enforcement. Tailor the response to the drone’s location and flight activity, but do not try to apprehend or take down the drone. Report all recorded details of the incident to law enforcement, including reports from eyewitnesses and stadium detection systems.

### Take immediate action following a drone sighting or crash.

**If the drone crashes**, secure and clear the area. Do not handle the drone; it is evidence and a potential explosives threat. Call law enforcement, report any suspicious indicators, and do not touch any part of the drone until a bomb squad or appropriate authority clears the scene.<sup>11</sup>

**If the drone is flying outside of the venue but not over the field or stands**, have venue personnel attempt to locate the drone operator and notify law enforcement. Note any identifying characteristics of the drone and its flight path. The operator may be outside of the stadium but within visual line of sight of the drone.



**If the drone is flying over the venue**, clear the area. Dispatch security personnel to provide guidance, maintain order, and prevent panic. Attempt to locate the drone operator and notify law enforcement. As seen in recent cases, a drone operator may be located outside of a sporting venue, but operating a drone over the venue. Note any identifying characteristics of the drone and report them to law enforcement, including:

- Type, size, color, payload, other notable physical features;
- Date, time, place; and
- Direction, distance above ground, and flight path.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional information, visit [cisa.gov/uas-critical-infrastructure](https://cisa.gov/uas-critical-infrastructure) or contact us at [central@cisa.gov](mailto:central@cisa.gov).

<sup>8</sup> For more information about drone detection resources, visit [dhs.gov/publication/st-c-uas-technology-guide](https://dhs.gov/publication/st-c-uas-technology-guide). To learn more about legal considerations for drone detection, visit [cisa.gov/publication/advisory-application-federal-laws-acquisition-and-use-technology-detect-and-mitigate](https://cisa.gov/publication/advisory-application-federal-laws-acquisition-and-use-technology-detect-and-mitigate).

<sup>9</sup> For questions relating to UAS exercises or information on how to download virtual exercises involving UAS scenarios, visit [cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-exercises](https://cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-exercises).

<sup>10</sup> For a summary of applicable FAA regulations for small UAS, visit [www.faa.gov/uas/media/Part\\_107\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/uas/media/Part_107_Summary.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Refer to CISA’s Office for Bombing Prevention Recognize Suspicious UAS poster and postcard for additional information, [cisa.gov/publication/recognize-suspicious-unmanned-aircraft-systems-uas-poster-and-postcard](https://cisa.gov/publication/recognize-suspicious-unmanned-aircraft-systems-uas-poster-and-postcard).