



The National Agricultural Law Center

nationalaglawcenter.org | nataglaw@uark.edu | [@nataglaw](https://twitter.com/nataglaw)

States' Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Laws: *Rhode Island*



This material is based upon work supported by the National Agricultural Library, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

A National Agricultural Law Center Research Publication

States' Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Laws: Rhode Island

RI ST § 1-8-1
250-RICR-100-00-1.27
800-RICR-10-00-1.17
800-RICR-10-00-1.4

Current through November 20, 2022

RI ST § 1-8-1 Exclusive Aerial Regulations

Subject to federal law, the state of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Airport Corporation shall have exclusive legal authority to regulate any object capable of flying that is remotely controlled and flies autonomously through software-controlled flight plans embedded in the object's system by a global-position system, commonly known as unpiloted aerial vehicles, remotely piloted aircraft, drones, or unmanned aircraft systems.

250-RICR-100-00-1.27 Motor Vehicles

- A. The traffic laws of the State of Rhode Island are fully applicable unless these Regulations provide otherwise.
- B. All motor vehicles must be legally street registered and operated by a licensed driver.
- C. Motor vehicles shall be operated only in designated areas, no motor vehicles are allowed off roads or trails where prohibited, except with official written permission. All electrically propelled devices, except those used to assist handicap or disabled persons are prohibited on State Property unless with official written permission.
- D. No person shall park a vehicle so as to block any road, gate or trail or to prevent access to others, nor shall they block another vehicle in a designated parking area, nor shall any vehicle be parked in any area, where prohibited.
- E. The speed limit is twenty-five (25) miles per hour unless otherwise posted.
- F. The operator of a motor vehicle shall grant the right-of-way to all pedestrians, persons on horseback and who are using or crossing roads, trails or highways.
- G. Airborne conveyances such as balloons, gliders, engine-powered airplanes unmanned aircraft systems, and ultra-lights shall not be operated without official written permission from the Individual Park Facility Manager.



- H. Off-Road recreational vehicles shall be legally street registered and used in accordance with law. Their use shall be limited to designated areas or trails at designated times.
- I. No person shall wash, polish, clean, change oil, or repair any motor vehicle or motorcycle in a Public Reservation.
- J. Snowmobile Operation -- General snowmobiles shall be allowed at designated areas and at times designated for those areas.
1. Snowmobiles must operate within the posted speed limit for that area.
 2. Operators shall grant the right-of-way to all pedestrian, horses and vehicular traffic when operating and crossing roads or trails.
 3. Snowmobiles shall not operate in a manner intended to or reasonably be expected to harass, drive or pursue any wildlife.
 4. In addition to firearm restrictions in R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 31-3.2, when carrying archery equipment while operating a snowmobile, all arrows shall not be nocked and shall be secured to the bow or in a quiver or other container.
- K. Snowmobile Operation-Management Area
1. Hours of operation are one half (1/2) hour before sunrise to 11:00 PM in Arcadia and George Washington, only. During the period one half (1/2) hour after sunset to 11:00 PM, the buddy system must be used.
 2. Hours of operation are one half (1/2) hour before sunrise to one half (1/2) hour after sunset in Burlingame Management Area, Wickaboxet, and Woody Hill, only.
 3. During the established shotgun deer season, snowmobiling is not permitted in Management Areas.
- L. Snowmobiles Operation Parks
- Hours of operation are sunrise to sunset in Burlingame, Colt, Lincoln Woods and Snake Den. (See Snowmobiles, R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 31-3.2).
- M. The vehicle patterns as established by the filing on May 5, 1972, Regulations of the Department of Natural Resources for Colt State Park, which became effective on June 1, 1972, and which were submitted and recodified in 2017 (see Vehicle Traffic Pattern for Colt State Park, Part 5 of this Subchapter), shall remain in force and are incorporated herein by reference.
- N. The Les Pawson Loop in Lincoln Woods, shall have a one-way counter-clockwise traffic pattern with two (2) exceptions. When the gates across the road are closed, traffic shall be two-way. That section of road, which lies between Twin River Road and the North Parking Lot area, shall be two-way.
- O. Commercial vehicles in excess of two and one half (2 ½) tons gross weight are prohibited on the highway running through Veterans Memorial Parkway in East Providence, Dean Parkway in Cranston, and Narragansett Parkway in Warwick, except by official written permission.

800-RICR-10-00-1.17 Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)



- A. All UAS operations must be compliant with Federal statutes, rules, and regulations as amended or promulgated from time to time, including but not limited to 14 C.F.R. § 107 (2016).
- B. Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 1-8-1, RIAC has exclusive legal authority to regulate UAS within the state.
- C. Any person operating a UAS or in possession of a UAS on public or private property with the intent to operate shall, upon request, allow the Director or his/her designee, or any state or municipal law enforcement officer to inspect the UAS.
- D. The Director or his/her designee, and any state and municipal law enforcement officer has the authority to assist and cooperate in the enforcement of these regulations.

800-RICR-10-00-1.4 Definitions

A. The definitions set forth herein are derived from, and shall be interpreted to be consistent with, Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (“C.F.R.”), the Uniform Aeronautical Regulatory Act (“UAR”), and R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 1-4-1 et seq., and 1-2-3.1. The following words and phrases shall have meanings as set forth below:

1. “Aeronautics” means transportation by Aircraft, Air Instruction, the Operation, repair, or maintenance of Aircraft, and the design, Operation, repair, or maintenance of Airports or Landing Areas.
2. “Aeronautics inspector” means an employee of RIAC charged by the Director to make recommendations and enforce the provisions of the UAR and these regulations.
3. “Aircraft” means any contrivance now known or invented, used, or designed for navigation of, or flight in, the air, except a Parachute or other contrivance designed for air navigation but used primarily as safety equipment.
4. “Air instruction” means the imparting of aeronautical information by any aviation instructor. Air Instruction includes any individual engaged in providing, or offering to provide, instruction in Aeronautics, in flying, in ground subjects, or in both, either with or without compensation or other reward, without advertising his or her occupation, without calling his or her facilities “Air School” or any equivalent term, and without employing or using other instructors.
5. “Air school” means any Person engaged in giving, offering to give, or advertising, representing, or holding him or herself out as giving, with or without compensation or other award, instruction in Aeronautics, flying, in ground subjects, or in both.
6. “Airport” means any Landing Area that provides facilities for the shelter, supply, and repair of Aircraft and which, as to size, design, surface, marking, equipment, and management meets the minimum requirements established in § 1.6 of this Part.



7. "Airport manager" means the Person designated as the one responsible for the proper operation of the Airport, in conformance with Federal Requirements, Rhode Island Laws, and the Aeronautics Regulations and Operations Directives of the Airport.
8. "Balloon" means a lighter than air Aircraft that is not engine-driven and that sustains flight through the use of either gas buoyancy or an airborne heater and may be further characterized as a Manned Free Balloon or an Unmanned Free Balloon.
9. "B.A.S.E jumping" means an activity that employs an initially packed parachute to jump from fixed objects. B.A.S.E. is an acronym that stands for four categories of fixed objects from which one can jump: Building, Antenna, Span, and Earth (cliff).
10. "Careless, reckless, and/or negligent acts" means any act that may endanger property and/or the safety of Persons on the ground and/or in the air. Such acts shall include:
 - a. Aircraft Operations other than for the purpose of air navigation on any part of the surface of an Airport used by Aircraft for air commerce (including areas used by those Aircraft for receiving or discharging Persons or cargo),
 - b. operating an Aircraft in a manner that is a hazard to navigation;
 - c. failure to obtain approvals or otherwise comply with FAA Requirements, and/or the regulations and directives issued by RIAC, and/or
 - d. any other acts included under 14 C.F.R. § 91 (1989).
11. "Certified aircraft" means any Aircraft for which an Aircraft certificate other than a registration certificate has been issued by the government of the United States.
12. "Civil aircraft" means any Aircraft other than a Public Aircraft.
13. "Common traffic advisory frequency" or "CTAF" means a radio frequency used for air-to-air communication designated for the purpose of carrying out Airport advisory practices while operating to or from an Airport without an operating control tower or where the tower is not Operational.
14. "Dealer in aircraft" or "Aircraft dealer" means any Person who engages in a business, a substantial part of which consists of the manufacture, selling, or exchanging of Aircraft and who is registered as a dealer with the federal government.
15. "Director" means the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Airport Corporation.
16. "Drop zone" or "DZ" means any pre-determined area upon which parachutists or objects land after making an intentional Parachute jump as defined in 14 C.F.R. § 105.3 (2001).
17. "Flight school" means the same as Air School.
18. "Flying club" means any number of Persons (other than one individual) who, for neither profit nor reward, owns, leases, or uses one or more Aircraft for the purpose of instruction, pleasure, or both.



19. "Heliport" or "Helistop" means any landing area that is proposed or used for the landing and takeoff of helicopters.
20. "Jumper" means any Person Skydiving or Parachute Jumping.
21. "Landing area" means an Airport, or any area of land, water, or both, otherwise referred to as a Landing Field, which is used or is made available for the landing and take-off of Aircraft, which may or may not provide facilities for the shelter, supply, and repair of Aircraft, and which, as to size, design, surface, marking, equipment, and management meets the minimum requirements established in § 1.6 of this Part from time to time by the Director.
22. "Military aircraft" means Public Aircraft Operated in the service of the United States Army, Air Force, National Guard, Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard.
23. "Movement area" means the runways, taxiways, and other areas of an airport which are used for taxiing or hover taxiing, takeoff, and landing of Aircraft, exclusive of loading ramps or Aircraft parking areas, as defined in 14 C.F.R. § 139.5 (2013).
24. "Operate" or "Operation" means, with respect to Aircraft, to use, cause to use or authorize to use an Aircraft, for the purpose of engine start, movement on the ground (taxi), or air navigation including the piloting of Aircraft, with or without the right of legal control (as Owner, lessee, or otherwise).
25. "Operations directives" means requirements issued by RIAC that pertain to the internal operations of a public use Airport. Operations Directives shall be posted in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 1-4-11 in the main Aeronautics office of the Director at least five (5) days before the effective date and mailed or e-mailed to users of the Airport that are impacted by the directives.
26. "Operator" means a Person who Operates or is in actual physical control of an Aircraft.
27. "Owner" means the legal title holder or any person, firm, co-partnership, association, or corporation having the lawful possession or control of an Aircraft under a written agreement.
28. "Parachute" means a device used or intended to be used to retard the fall of a body or object through the air.
29. "Person" means any individual, partnership, corporation, association, entity, governmental subdivision, or public or private organization of any character.
30. "Pilot in command" means a properly licensed Pilot who is directly responsible for, and is the final authority, as to the Operation of the Aircraft as defined in 14 C.F.R. § 91 (1989) Subpart A and 14 C.F.R. § 107 (2016).
31. "Public aircraft" means an Aircraft used exclusively in the governmental service.
32. "Private restricted landing area" "PRLAs" means any Landing Area that is not open for public use, including but not limited to Landing Fields, heliports and helistops.



33. "RIAC" means the Rhode Island Airport Corporation. For purposes of 29 U.S.C. § 28-9.4-2(e) only, a "political subdivision" of the State of Rhode Island, as defined by those sections.

34. "Skydiving" or "Parachute jumping" means the descent of a Person to the surface from an Aircraft in flight, when he/she intends to use, or uses, a Parachute during all or part of that descent.

35. "Skydiving/Parachuting jump center" means an area and its facilities and organization where Skydiving and/or Parachuting is regularly conducted and for which approval has been issued by RIAC.

36. "Unmanned aircraft" or "UA" means an Aircraft operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the Aircraft.

37. "Unmanned aircraft system" or "UAS" means a UA and its associated elements that is capable of sustained flight in the atmosphere, including communication links and the components that control the UA, that are required for the pilot in command to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system. The UA may be remotely controlled or may fly autonomously through software-controlled flight plans in their embedded systems working in conjunction with GPS.

38. "Ultralights" means Aircraft vehicles including gliders, sailplanes, motor gliders, paragliders, motorized paragliders, hang gliders and any other Aircraft vehicle that meets the definition set forth in 14 C.F.R. § 103.1 (1982).

