

# Illinois Unmanned Aerial System Oversight Task Force Meeting 3



Meeting Information	
<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	March 3, 2016 – 1:30 PM
<b>Location</b>	IDOT – Division of Aeronautics Large Conference Room
<b>Address</b>	1 Langhorne Bond Drive Springfield, IL 62707

## Meeting Minutes

### 1. Welcome

Steve Young, Task Force Chair and Interim Director of the IDOT Division of Aeronautics began the meeting by welcoming the Task Force members and going over general housekeeping items.

### 2. Introductions

Task force members introduced themselves. Additional attendees also introduced themselves.

### 3. Federal & State Regulatory Update

Updates to proposed Federal/State legislation were reviewed, including the current status of the Federal Aviation Innovation, Reform and Reauthorization (AIRR) Act, Illinois House Bill 5808 and Illinois Senate Bill 2344, and a proposed ordinance from the Village of Manhattan.

The Task Force recognized the current status of Federal-level UAS regulations, emphasizing any State-level oversight be compatible with any future Federal rules and also adaptable to future Federal-level changes.

### 4. Discussion: Overall Conceptual Approach

Task Force Members were asked to comment on a proposed State-level definition of UAS. The Task Force's consensus was to focus on a centralized and standard definition for UAS within the Illinois Aeronautics Act to be referenced within other State statutes. The adoption of the FAA's definition of UAS, with slight modifications to remove weight-based delineation was commonly agreed upon.

The Task Force discussed the most appropriate approach of addressing UAS legislatively. The Task Force generally concluded that violation of existing statutes via UAS should be handled no differently than violation of existing statutes in-person or by other means (i.e. - implementing an arbitrary additional penalty if the violation is carried out via UAS vs. by some other means). Similarly, the Task Force generally agreed that is likely not appropriate or necessary to individually include or single out UAS in multiple statutes or add UAS-centric language to every statute that could have UAS-

related implications. The Task Force recognized that while there might be a limited number of new items to consider that are unique to UAS, existing laws should mostly be sufficient; provided there is legislative language that clearly links use of UAS back to the operator and/or owner (i.e. an “extension of self” clause that states utilization of a UAS to violate a statute is legally equivalent to in-person violation.)

The Task Force acknowledged the increasing issue of local ordinances and the impact they could have on UAS operators and the UAS industry. The Task Force agreed that a patchwork of local ordinances is not desirable and would undoubtedly lead to confusion and an increased burden on UAS operators and the UAS industry. Additionally, many local ordinances, while well-intentioned, are written by those unfamiliar with the nuances and complexities of FAA airspace and operational regulations. Therefore, unless drafted with extreme care, there exists a reasonably high likelihood many local ordinances may, in fact, include language that is in conflict or in violation of Federal law. The Task Force discussed the logistics of recommending a State-level preemption clause that would limit local ordinances. The Task Force recognized the need to provide some local-level oversight capacity, so preemption language could be coupled with an enumerated list of acceptable local-level restrictions, including requirements that must be followed to implement local-level restrictions (location types, signage, public process, etc.).

The Task Force recognized that the Federal guidance regarding UAS is not finalized and currently in a state of flux. There exists a strong likelihood that Federal regulations will not be finalized before the Task Force issues their Report. Acknowledging the fluid nature of the regulatory landscape and rapidly changing capabilities of UAS, the Task Force discussed ways of addressing future changes. The conversation centered around the level of UAS oversight that should be accomplished via statute vs. rules developed and adopted via the JCAR (Joint Committee on Administrative Rules) process. Statutes may provide a broad framework for UAS in Illinois, while departmental JCAR rules could provide detail and can be more easily updated and adapted to keep pace with future updates to Federal regulations and changes in the UAS industry.

## **5. Member Presentations/Contributions**

Linda Rhodes (ComEd) – Linda provided an overview of the current and future uses of UAS at ComEd. She highlighted some of the benefits their UAS program has achieved, including increased public/employee safety, system reliability, and reduced environmental impact. ComEd is working to increase public awareness of their use of UAS and educate local municipalities and stakeholder about the benefits UAS provide to ComEd and their customers.

Gordon Cockburn (Hobbico) – Gordon Provided examples of hobby-grade UAS and the concerns UAS manufacturers have regarding UAS oversight. He mentioned the perception vs. reality of UAS is often over-hyped and anticipated that eventually the public fascination will settle down and a natural balance will be found on the recreational side of UAS. Gordon also emphasized that UAs are not just quadcopters, or “drones,” but are any type of remotely piloted craft – fixed wing, helicopters, and a variety of other types. UAS rules and ordinances impact all UAS, not just quadcopters.

Rich Hanson (AMA) – Guest speaker at the invitation of Mr. Cockburn. Mr. Hanson is the Government and Regulatory Affairs Representative with the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA). Rich explained the long history of model aircraft and the recent exposure “drones” have brought to this decades-old hobby. He focused on the challenges – and importance – of educating the public, elected officials, the media and others about the realities of model aircraft. Mr. Hanson explained the AMA’s commitment to protecting model aircraft and also to exposing the next generation to the hobby. The AMA believes model aircraft can be an important tool in promoting STEM education, can provide a fun and positive outlet for youth, and can expose the next generation of aviation enthusiasts – pilots, engineers, etc. Mr. Hanson emphasized AMA’s partnership with the FAA and others in the Know Before You Fly education campaign and mentioned AMA is working toward establishing community-based opportunities for drone owners who want to learn the rules and the appropriate and safe way to fly.

#### **6. Discussion: Private Use (Recreational / Hobby)**

Task Force Members discussed potential requirements for Recreational UAS operators, including possible registration, fees, insurance requirements, etc. There was limited desire to establish any definitive requirements or limitations, as most recreational UAS are used as toys for personal enjoyment. Should an operator violate an existing Federal or State statute, they would be subject to legal action as appropriate, but generally, the Task Force saw no benefit in imposing significant restrictions on how consumers should purchase or use toys. The TY Task Force also reinforced the unknown status of the FAA UAS regulations and recognized that future Federal-level UAS rules may impact how UAS are categorized and which UAS are subject to regulation at a Federal Level.

The Task Force identified that education will perhaps be the most important aspect of addressing recreational/hobby UAS at the State level. Several Task Force Members strongly urged consideration of an education component to the Task Force’s recommendations as a natural and necessary outgrowth to accompany any oversight/limitations put in place. Rather than making the focus primarily on developing restrictions or punitive action, a more positive, proactive, and comprehensive approach to UAS could be encouraged – especially regarding recreational use – which could include an education/awareness campaign, agency partnerships, or other proactive methods of encouraging safe and legal operation of UAS.

#### **7. Next Steps**

The meeting concluded with a reminder to research federal regulations, research developments in pending State legislation, and to submit discussion topics for the next meeting.

***Note:** Topics and concepts discussed at meetings and/or included in meeting minutes do not do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all Task Force Members and do not represent the official final recommendations of the Task Force.*