

Below are the laws currently on the books in the State of Florida that pertain to the flying of drones or small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS). These laws are in addition to the federal laws governing sUAS operations, specifically 14CFR107.

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0300-0399/0330/Sections/0330.41.html

330.41 Unmanned Aircraft Systems Act.

(1) SHORT TITLE.—This act may be cited as the “Unmanned Aircraft Systems Act.”

(2) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this act, the term:

(a) “Critical infrastructure facility” means any of the following, if completely enclosed by a fence or other physical barrier that is obviously designed to exclude intruders, or if clearly marked with a sign or signs which indicate that entry is forbidden and which are posted on the property in a manner reasonably likely to come to the attention of intruders:

1. An electrical power generation or transmission facility, substation, switching station, or electrical control center.
2. A chemical or rubber manufacturing or storage facility.
3. A mining facility.
4. A natural gas or compressed gas compressor station, storage facility, or natural gas or compressed gas pipeline.
5. A liquid natural gas or propane gas terminal or storage facility with a capacity of 4,000 gallons or more.
6. Any portion of an aboveground oil or gas pipeline.
7. A wireless communications facility, including the tower, antennae, support structures, and all associated ground- based equipment.

(b) “Drone” has the same meaning as s. 934.50(2).

(c) “Unmanned aircraft system” means a drone and its associated elements, including communication links and the components used to control the drone which are required for the pilot in command to operate the drone safely and efficiently.

(3) REGULATION.—

(a) The authority to regulate the operation of unmanned aircraft systems is vested in the state except as provided in federal regulations, authorizations, or exemptions.

(b) Except as otherwise expressly provided, a political subdivision may not enact or enforce an ordinance or resolution relating to the design, manufacture, testing, maintenance, licensing, registration, certification, or operation of an unmanned aircraft system, including airspace, altitude, flight paths, equipment or technology requirements; the purpose of operations; and pilot, operator, or observer qualifications, training, and certification.

(c) This subsection does not limit the authority of a local government to enact or enforce local ordinances relating to nuisances, voyeurism, harassment, reckless endangerment, property damage, or other illegal acts arising from the use of unmanned aircraft systems if such laws or ordinances are not specifically related to the use of an unmanned aircraft system for those illegal acts.

(d) A person or governmental entity seeking to restrict or limit the operation of drones in close proximity to infrastructure or facilities that the person or governmental entity owns or operates must apply to the Federal Aviation Administration for such designation pursuant to section 2209 of the FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016.

(4) PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES.—

(a) A person may not knowingly or willfully:

1. Operate a drone over a critical infrastructure facility;
2. Allow a drone to make contact with a critical infrastructure facility, including any person or object on the premises of or within the facility; or
3. Allow a drone to come within a distance of a critical infrastructure facility that is close enough to interfere with the operations of or cause a disturbance to the facility.

(b) A person who violates paragraph (a) commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083. A person who commits a second or subsequent violation commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

(c) This subsection does not apply to actions identified in paragraph (a) which are committed by:

1. A federal, state, or other governmental entity, or a person under contract or otherwise acting under the direction of a federal, state, or other governmental entity.
2. A law enforcement agency that is in compliance with s. 934.50, or a person under contract with or otherwise acting under the direction of such law enforcement agency.
3. An owner, operator, or occupant of the critical infrastructure facility, or a person who has prior written consent of such owner, operator, or occupant.

(d) Subparagraph (a)1. does not apply to a drone operating in transit for commercial purposes in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration regulations, authorizations, or exemptions.

(e) This subsection shall sunset 60 days after the date that a process pursuant to Section 2209 of the FAA Extension, Safety and Security Act of 2016 becomes effective.

(5) CONSTRUCTION.—This section shall be construed in accordance with standards imposed by federal statutes, regulations, and Federal Aviation Administration guidance on unmanned aircraft systems.

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0300-0399/0330/Sections/0330.411.html

330.411 Prohibited possession or operation of unmanned aircraft.

A person may not possess or operate an unmanned aircraft or unmanned aircraft system as defined in s. 330.41 with an attached weapon, firearm, explosive, destructive device, or ammunition as defined in s. 790.001.

State Statute 934.50 Searches and seizure using a drone.

(1) SHORT TITLE.—

This act may be cited as the “Freedom from Unwarranted Surveillance Act.”

(2) DEFINITIONS.—

As used in this act, the term:

(a) “Drone” means a powered, aerial vehicle that:

Does not carry a human operator;

Uses aerodynamic forces to provide vehicle lift;

Can fly autonomously or be piloted remotely;

Can be expendable or recoverable; and

Can carry a lethal or nonlethal payload.

(b) “Image” means a record of thermal, infrared, ultraviolet, visible light, or other electromagnetic waves; sound waves; odors; or other physical phenomena which captures conditions existing on or about real property or an individual located on that property.

(c) “Imaging device” means a mechanical, digital, or electronic viewing device; still camera; camcorder; motion picture camera; or any other instrument, equipment, or format capable of recording, storing, or transmitting an image.

(d) “Law enforcement agency” means a lawfully established state or local public agency that is responsible for the prevention and detection of crime, local government code enforcement, and the enforcement of penal, traffic, regulatory, game, or controlled substance laws.

(e) “Surveillance” means:

With respect to an owner, tenant, occupant, invitee, or licensee of privately-owned real property, the observation of such persons with sufficient visual clarity to be able to obtain information about their identity, habits, conduct, movements, or whereabouts; or

With respect to privately owned real property, the observation of such property’s physical improvements with sufficient visual clarity to be able to determine unique identifying features or its occupancy by one or more persons.

(3) PROHIBITED USE OF DRONES.—

(a) A law enforcement agency may not use a drone to gather evidence or other information.

(b) A person, a state agency, or a political subdivision as defined in s. 11.45 may not use a drone equipped with an imaging device to record an image of privately owned real property or of the owner, tenant, occupant, invitee, or licensee of such property with the intent to conduct surveillance on the individual or property captured in the image in violation of such person’s reasonable expectation of privacy without his or her written

consent. For purposes of this section, a person is presumed to have a reasonable expectation of privacy on his or her privately owned real property if he or she is not observable by persons located at ground level in a place where they have a legal right to be, regardless of whether he or she is observable from the air with the use of a drone.

(4) EXCEPTIONS.—

This section does not prohibit the use of a drone:

- (a) To counter a high risk of a terrorist attack by a specific individual or organization if the United States Secretary of Homeland Security determines that credible intelligence indicates that there is such a risk.
- (b) If the law enforcement agency first obtains a search warrant signed by a judge authorizing the use of a drone.
- (c) If the law enforcement agency possesses reasonable suspicion that, under particular circumstances, swift action is needed to prevent imminent danger to life or serious damage to property, to forestall the imminent escape of a suspect or the destruction of evidence, or to achieve purposes including, but not limited to, facilitating the search for a missing person.
- (d) By a person or an entity engaged in a business or profession licensed by the state, or by an agent, employee, or contractor thereof, if the drone is used only to perform reasonable tasks within the scope of practice or activities permitted under such person's or entity's license. However, this exception does not apply to a profession in which the licensee's authorized scope of practice includes obtaining information about the identity, habits, conduct, movements, whereabouts, affiliations, associations, transactions, reputation, or character of any society, person, or group of persons.
- (e) By an employee or a contractor of a property appraiser who uses a drone solely for the purpose of assessing property for ad valorem taxation.
- (f) To capture images by or for an electric, water, or natural gas utility:
For operations and maintenance of utility facilities, including facilities used in the generation, transmission, or distribution of electricity, gas, or water, for the purpose of maintaining utility system reliability and integrity;
For inspecting utility facilities, including pipelines, to determine construction, repair, maintenance, or replacement needs before, during, and after construction of such facilities;
For assessing vegetation growth for the purpose of maintaining clearances on utility rights-of-way;
For utility routing, siting, and permitting for the purpose of constructing utility facilities or providing utility service; or
For conducting environmental monitoring, as provided by federal, state, or local law, rule, or permit.
- (g) For aerial mapping, if the person or entity using a drone for this purpose is operating in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration regulations.
- (h) To deliver cargo, if the person or entity using a drone for this purpose is operating in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration regulations.
- (i) To capture images necessary for the safe operation or navigation of a drone that is being used for a purpose allowed under federal or Florida law.

(j) By a communications service provider or a contractor for a communications service provider for routing, siting, installation, maintenance, or inspection of facilities used to provide communications services.

(5) REMEDIES FOR VIOLATION.—

(a) An aggrieved party may initiate a civil action against a law enforcement agency to obtain all appropriate relief in order to prevent or remedy a violation of this section.

(b) The owner, tenant, occupant, invitee, or licensee of privately-owned real property may initiate a civil action for compensatory damages for violations of this section and may seek injunctive relief to prevent future violations of this section against a person, state agency, or political subdivision that violates paragraph (3)(b). In such action, the prevailing party is entitled to recover reasonable attorney fees from the nonprevailing party based on the actual and reasonable time expended by his or her attorney billed at an appropriate hourly rate and, in cases in which the payment of such a fee is contingent on the outcome, without a multiplier, unless the action is tried to verdict, in which case a multiplier of up to twice the actual value of the time expended may be awarded in the discretion of the trial court.

(c) Punitive damages for a violation of paragraph (3)(b) may be sought against a person subject to other requirements and limitations of law, including, but not limited to, part II of chapter 768 and case law.

(d) The remedies provided for a violation of paragraph (3)(b) are cumulative to other existing remedies.

(6) PROHIBITION ON USE OF EVIDENCE.—

Evidence obtained or collected in violation of this act is not admissible as evidence in a criminal prosecution in any court of law in this state.

<https://www.flrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?id=5I-4.003>

Florida Administrative Code 5I-4.003.(11) (Forestry – Vehicular, Animal and Pedestrian Control)

No person shall takeoff or land an aircraft on managed lands, except at a runway or a helispot and only with authorization from the Service, and such authorization shall be based upon a determination that the takeoff or landing will not endanger the health, safety or welfare of any person; potentially damage the forest resources; or interfere with management objectives of that forest as provided in that forest's management plan. Authorization from the Service is not required in an emergency or for Service official business.)

(Drones are covered under this statute by definition of aircraft given in 5I-4.002)

Case Law

Singer v. City of Newton (2016) – preemption validation – See FS 330.41

United States v. Causby (1946) – airspace ownership of a private individual “immediate reaches above the land”

Florida v. Riley (1989) – search by law enforcement not implemented when conducted from general airspace with naked eye.

For further information contact the ROC:

FAA Regional Operations Center 404-305-5180

https://ecfr.io/Title-14/cfr107_main

Specific areas of caution in The Villages:

- Cellular and emergency communications towers and electrical distribution substations are critical infrastructure facilities under FS 330.41, operation of a drone over these is prohibited.
- High voltage transmission lines are approximately 175 feet high and may interfere with drone communications and operation, maintain a safe distance for these powerlines.
- The Villages Regional Hospital has a helipad with frequent helicopter operations, stay clear of this area.
- The town squares are frequently occupied by large crowds of people. Operation of a drone over persons not directly participating in its operation is prohibited by 14CFR107.39.
- The majority of The Villages is within 5 miles of one or more small airports. The operators of these airports shall be notified by the pilots prior to operating in these areas.