UAV REGISTRATIONS AT 181,000; MODEL AIRCRAFT GROUP FIGHTS RULE

News / Airlines

FAA administrator Michael Huerta said the mandatory registration process for recreational unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has proceeded smoothly, with 181,000 registrations completed so far.

The number of registrations represents owners of UAVs weighing between .55 lbs. and 55 lbs.; an owner can register multiple vehicles using the same number. FAA launched a registration website Dec. 21.

“We’re encouraged by the registration numbers we’re seeing so far,” Huerta said Jan. 6 in a speech at a consumer electronics conference in Las Vegas. He added that the 181,000 registrations “is just the beginning. Now that we have set up the registration system, our challenge is to make sure everyone is aware of the requirement and registers.”

The sizable number of registrations has occurred despite a public campaign by the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) that encourages the organization’s members to “hold off” on registering. Owners of small, recreational UAVs who purchased their devices prior to Dec. 21 have until Feb.

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19 to register.

According to AMA's government regulations blog, the organization is telling members who owned UAVs prior to Dec. 21 to not register "until advised by the AMA or until the FAA's legal deadline of Feb. 19."

AMA has called FAA's UAV registration requirement an "unnecessary regulatory burden on our members." The organization said the requirement "is contrary to the intent of Congress," adding that it is "fully considering all possible legal and political options."

AMA said it is also working with FAA "on an automated process allowing members to register through membership in the AMA [that] will allow modelers to use their AMA number as their registration number."

FAA's registration website is now the only way for UAV owners to register. But Huerta said FAA is exploring "new methods of making the registration process even easier for consumers. For example, we are working to support potential third-party applications, such as smart phone apps, that could enable manufacturers or retailers to scan a code on a drone and automatically register it."

FAA did not immediately respond to a request for comment on AMA's "hold off" campaign.

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