

Small Unmanned Aircraft Order to be gazetted on Friday

The Small Unmanned Aircraft Order (SUA Order) will be gazetted on Friday (July 16) and tabled in the Legislative Council on July 21.

A spokesman for the Transport and Housing Bureau said, "Small unmanned aircraft (SUA), more commonly known as 'drones', have been gaining popularity over the past few years both in Hong Kong and worldwide. The uses of SUA range from recreation and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education to professional deployment for powerline inspections, surveying, 3D mapping, search and rescue operations, aerial photography and filming, drone shows, etc. The SUA Order, a piece of subsidiary legislation made under the Civil Aviation Ordinance (Cap. 448), will provide a forward-looking regulatory regime that can foster the innovative development and application of SUA in Hong Kong in tandem with evolving technology, while safeguarding aviation and public safety."

Under the new regulatory regime, SUA operations will be regulated under a risk-based approach. Based on the weight of the SUA and the operational risk level, SUA operations of different risk levels will be subject to the corresponding regulatory requirements. These requirements may include registration and labelling of SUA, registration of remote pilots, training and assessment, equipment, operating requirements and insurance. While SUA operations of 250 grams or below are in general subject to operating requirements only, prior permission from the Civil Aviation Department (CAD) will be required for higher risk operations.

The spokesman said, "To tie in with the new regulatory regime, the CAD has also been working closely with the Employees Retraining Board, the Vocational Training Council and the Hong Kong Productivity Council on a pilot scheme to validate the SUA training syllabus and assessment criteria. This will pave the way for approval of the SUA training organisations under the new regulatory regime. We are pleased to advise that the first validated course will be rolled out in mid July. Participants will gain a thorough understanding of the new regulatory requirements and develop situational awareness and safety management skills through flight planning, risk assessment and mitigating measures. It is expected that more courses will be rolled out in the coming months. At the same time, we will provide an alternative and facilitating means to recognise remote pilots who possess the relevant experience and could meet the required competency level."

The CAD is developing a new dedicated electronic portal for SUA for launch in the first quarter of 2022. It will be a one-stop and user-friendly electronic platform for the public to register, make applications and access safety information under the new regulatory regime. A safety requirements document and relevant guidance materials will also be published by the same time to facilitate easy and one-stop access to the new requirements and

implementation arrangements.

The SUA Order will commence on June 1, 2022. To allow the community to smoothly transit into the new regulatory regime, a six-month grace period will be given to allow the public to familiarise themselves with the new requirements and prepare for compliance. The exceptions are offences in relation to endangering acts, restricted flying zones and enforcement which should take effect upon commencement of SUA Order to safeguard aviation and public safety.