NEW RULES TO REIN IN ILLEGAL FLYING OF CIVILIAN DRONES

News / Airlines

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China will soon publish regulations for civilian unmanned aircraft that will help put an end to irregular flights, according to an industry insider.

Ke Yubao, executive secretary-general of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association of China

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(AOPA-China), said on Monday that the Civil Aviation Administration of China has drafted a provisional regulation on the operation of light-duty civilian drones and is soliciting suggestions and opinions.

"The regulation will be published as soon as early December," he said.

The regulation will contribute to closing statutory loopholes in the management of unmanned aircraft and make it more convenient for drone owners, according to Ke.

"Currently, there are several CAAC regulations that govern the use of civilian drones, but most of them lack specific and practical rules," Ke said. "The new regulation will set clear rules on which flights are legal and which are not permitted."

Ke noted the regulation will ban small drones from delivering packages to urban residents. Such drone-based delivery systems are being developed and tested by online shopping service providers like U.S. firm Amazon.

"This is because the detection and collision-avoidance systems on small drones are not good enough to avoid the dense building clusters and electric wires. A collision and crash will compromise the safety of people on the ground," he said.

Under the new regulation, a drone that weighs less than 25 kilograms and flies at an altitude of lower than 150 meters will be exempt from an airworthiness certification but will still need to register with the civil aviation authority, he said.

Those weighing from 25 to 150 kg will have to go through airworthiness certification before they are allowed to operate.

All flights performed by drones will be required to submit a flight plan before an aircraft takes off, Ke revealed.

An industry report recently released by the association estimates that nearly 90 percent of civilian drones on the Chinese mainland are lighter than 25 kg and have a ceiling of 150 m.

There are about 20,000 drones on the mainland in use for civilian purposes. Businesses including agricultural pest control, environmental monitoring and geographic surveying have greatly benefited from the use of drones, according to Zhang Feng, board chairman of the association.

01 DECEMBER 2015

SOURCE: CHINA DAILY
ARTICLE LINK:
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