



Oregon

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Oregon Department of Aviation Releases New Drone Training and Testing Template for Oregon Public Agencies

SALEM, OR – The Oregon Department of Aviation (ODAV) has released a new training and testing companion to its public agency drone policy template, giving Oregon public bodies a clearer path for training, evaluating, and documenting the people who fly drones for public work.

The earlier ODAV template helped agencies answer an important question: What rules should guide public agency drone use? This new document answers the next question: How do we know the people using those drones are trained, tested, and ready for the mission?

The new template adds detailed training standards, practical evaluation tools, test-bank questions, pilot qualification checklists, recurrent training guidance, and more in-depth content for public safety missions. It also includes expanded sections for Drone as First Responder, fire and EMS support, search and rescue, emergency management, law enforcement support, mutual aid, remote operations, and FAA-authorized advanced operations such as BVLOS.

“This is the next step in building safe and accountable public agency drone programs in Oregon,” said Kenji Sugahara, Director of the Oregon Department of Aviation. “A policy tells an agency what the rules are. Training and testing show whether people can actually apply those rules in the field. That matters when drones are being used near roads, bridges, neighborhoods, emergency scenes, firefighters, patients, helicopters, or disaster areas.”

For Oregonians, the benefit is practical. Drones can help public agencies inspect damaged bridges, check flooded roads, find missing people, assess wildfire or storm damage, support firefighters, and keep workers out of dangerous places. But the public should also know that agency pilots are not just handed a drone and sent into the air. They should be trained, tested, supervised, and held to clear standards.

Oregon Department of Aviation's mission is to enable and advocate for a safe and efficient aviation system that connects communities and drives economic growth

The new template helps agencies build that kind of program. It includes written test questions, practical flight evaluation standards, emergency drills, airspace deconfliction exercises, privacy and data-handling training, public records training, maintenance requirements, and checklists for deciding when a drone should not launch. It also makes clear that public safety and law enforcement uses require additional review, legal authority, and mission-specific training.

“This is about protecting the public, the pilots, the responders, and the airspace,” Sugahara said. “A drone can be a valuable public tool, but only when it is used by trained people under clear limits. Oregon agencies need a way to prove readiness before a real emergency, not after something goes wrong.”

The document is intended to be customized by cities, counties, state agencies, special districts, fire departments, emergency managers, transportation agencies, public works teams, and other Oregon public bodies. ODAV encourages agencies to review the template with legal counsel, records staff, information technology staff, risk managers, public safety leaders, and community stakeholders before adoption.

The template does not create new authority to fly drones, conduct law enforcement operations, or operate beyond FAA limits. Instead, it gives Oregon public agencies a practical framework for building responsible drone programs that are safer, better documented, and easier for the public to understand.

The template is available [HERE](#).

About the Oregon Department of Aviation

Established in 1921, the Oregon Department of Aviation was the first state aviation department in the nation. ODAV enables and advocates for a safe and efficient aviation system that connects communities and drives economic growth.

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