

Got drones?

With the surging popularity of drones (more than 15,000 are sold every month nationwide), chances are you'll be seeing more of them in the skies over Oro Valley. Do you know the rules and safety concerns for drones? Are you aware of locations where you are permitted to fly them? Be sure you "Know before you fly!"

The United States Government has exclusive sovereignty of airspace in the U.S., and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has the authority to prescribe air traffic regulations, including unmanned aircraft systems (including drones). In September 2015, the FAA submitted an Advisory Circular (http://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Advisory_Circular/AC_91-57A.pdf) to provide guidance for the recreational/hobby model aircraft user. They are also partnering with "Know before you fly" (<http://knowbeforeyoufly.org/>).

While the list of rules is extensive, here are five highlights to help you stay safe while having fun:

- Follow community-based safety guidelines, as developed by organizations such as the [Academy of Model Aeronautics](#) (AMA).
- Fly no higher than 400 feet and remain below any surrounding obstacles when possible.
- Keep your aircraft in eyesight at all times, and use an observer to assist if needed.
- Remain well clear of and do not interfere with manned aircraft operations, and you must see and avoid other aircraft and obstacles at all times.
- Do not intentionally fly over unprotected persons or moving vehicles, and remain at least 25 feet away from individuals and vulnerable property.

In Oro Valley, the only approved place to fly model aircraft is just north of the sports fields in Naranja Park, 810 W. Naranja Drive. (Note: flying on sports fields is prohibited.) In order to fly at Naranja Park, you must have insurance. The AMA-sanctioned Sonoran Desert Flyers model aircraft club has called Naranja Park home since 2008, and membership with this group includes insurance. Membership is free for youth ages 18 and under. For More information, visit www.sonorandesertflyers.us.

Interested in a one-hour course on "Introductory to Drone Safety Flying?" Contact David Ladevaia, member of the Sonoran Desert Flyers, at 520-827-7877.

Be safe and have fun!