Drone Operations Overview

PILOT IN COMMAND



A brief introduction to safely operating Unmanned Aircraft Systems, (UAS)

This presentation is provided for general informational purposes only and is not a substitute for current FAA regulations, official guidance, airspace authorizations, or legal advice. Aviation rules, airspace restrictions, procedures, and operating requirements may change at any time. The aircraft owner and Pilot in Command are solely responsible for verifying current requirements and ensuring each operation complies with all applicable federal, state, local, and site-specific rules, regulations, restrictions, and required authorizations. The creator of this presentation is not liable for accuracy of data or actions by others.

The Go / No-Go Decision

01 Mission readiness

Review the purpose, flight itinerary, boundaries and general plan. Launch only when you've created a plan for your flight and performed a pre-flight inspection.

02 Site and conditions

Check airspace for TFRs, NOTAMs and pertinent local regulations. Assess wind, visibility, people, terrain, wires and recovery areas.

03 Aircraft and control link

Inspect props for damage and they are securely attached. Inspect aircraft for any signs of damage. Double check aircraft and controller batteries charge status.

04 Recovery plan

Verify the home point, return route and lost-link behavior. Set a battery reserve; test hover and controls. Understand Return-to-Home (RTH) settings.

Return-to-home settings must clear obstacles while staying within the applicable altitude limit.

Recreational or Part 107?

Ask why the aircraft is leaving the ground.

PURELY RECREATIONAL

Personal enjoyment is the purpose of the flight.

Examples
- Practicing for fun
- Personal vacation footage
- Flying with a hobby club

PART 107 / NON-RECREATIONAL

The flight serves work, an organization, a client, or another objective.

Examples
- School website or event coverage
- An unpaid school or media assignment*
- Volunteer mapping for a nonprofit
- Real-estate, inspection or business content

Become a Certificated Remote Pilot

Payment does not decide the category. Decide the purpose before takeoff; when uncertain, the FAA says to assume Part 107.

PART 107 BASELINE LIMITS

The operating envelope

400

ft AGL

Maximum altitude*

100

mph

Maximum groundspeed

3

statute miles

Minimum flight visibility

Visual line of sight

Maintain VLOS and yield to other aircraft.
A camera feed alone is insufficient.

Cloud clearance

At least 500 ft below clouds and
2,000 ft horizontally from clouds.

Drone Weight & FAA Registration

250 g / 0.55 lb or more: FAA registration is required for recreational flying.
Under 250 g / 0.55 lb: Registration is generally not required **if flown only recreationally**.
Part 107: All drones must be registered, regardless of weight.

Instrument awareness + visual line of sight

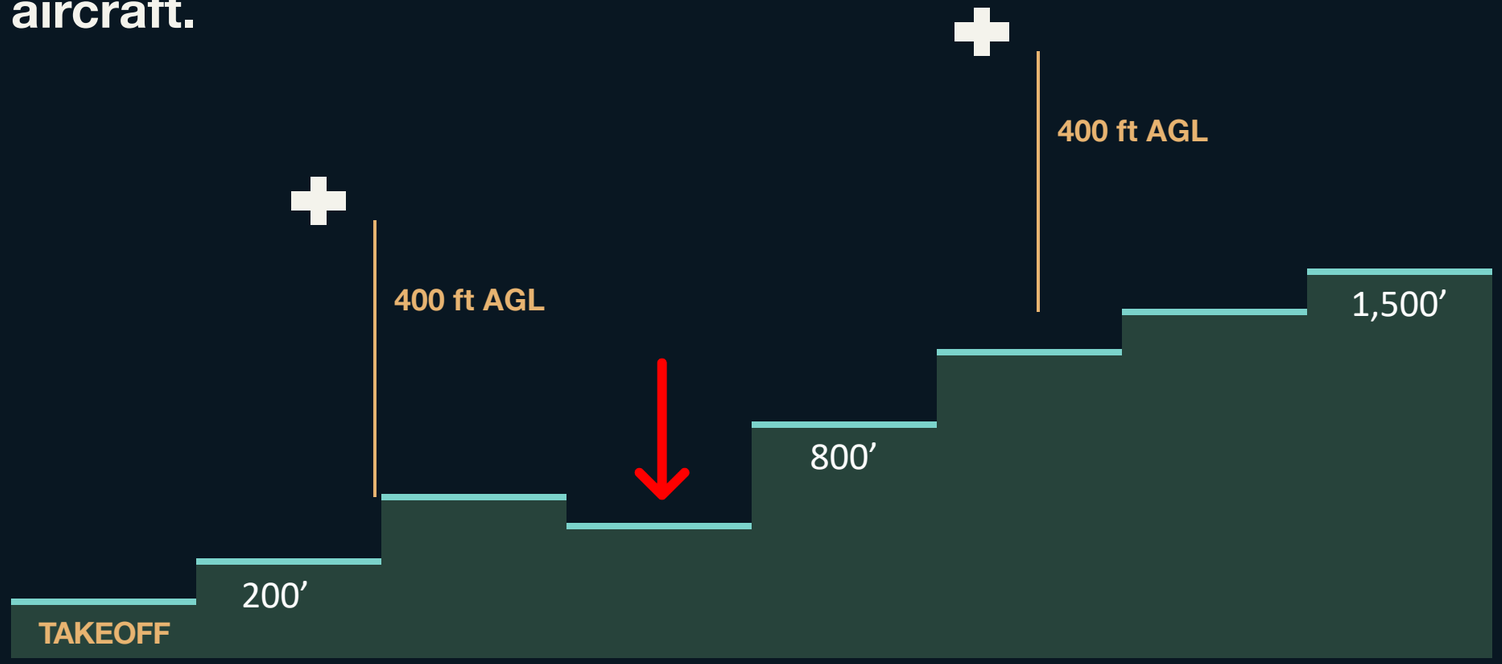
KNOW YOUR INSTRUMENTS

Altitude	Distance	Heading
Battery	GPS status	Warnings

Keep visual awareness of the aircraft and scan for traffic.

AGL follows the surface

400 ft is measured from the ground directly beneath the aircraft.



The aircraft may be more than 400 ft above the takeoff elevation while remaining no more than 400 ft AGL over rising terrain.

PART 107 STRUCTURE EXCEPTION

In Class G or E, Part 107 **Horizontal Distance:** The drone remains within a **400-foot radius** (laterally) of the structure.

Vertical Limit: The drone does not go higher than **400 feet above the structure's** immediate uppermost limit (highest point).



In controlled airspace (like Class B, C, or D), you must receive prior ATC or LAANC authorization, which sets an absolute altitude limit (often capped at 400' AGL or lower) that you **cannot** exceed by adding the height of a structure.

Terrain following and the structure exception do not override an airspace authorization, waiver condition, TFR, NOTAM or other restriction.

FAA Section 11-8-1. Best Practices for UAS Operations Official Resource Link

Night, people and restricted operations

01 Night operations

Recreational flight: You can fly at night under the recreational rules (§44809). You must have passed **TRUST** and follow an FAA-recognized Community Based Organization's safety guidelines, including its night-flight/lighting procedures. Federal Aviation Administration

Part 107 flight: If you're flying for **business or another non-recreational purpose**, you need Part 107 regardless of whether it's day or night. At night, the drone must have **anti-collision lighting visible for at least 3 statute miles**, and the pilot must have completed the applicable updated knowledge test/recurrent training.

02 Flying over people

The ability to fly over people varies. In general, you may only fly over people involved with your flight; ‘willing participants’. Non-participants need to be under a covered structure or stationary vehicle, the aircraft will pose no undo hazard to other aircraft, people or property and the drone is not operated recklessly.

03 Stadiums and TFRs

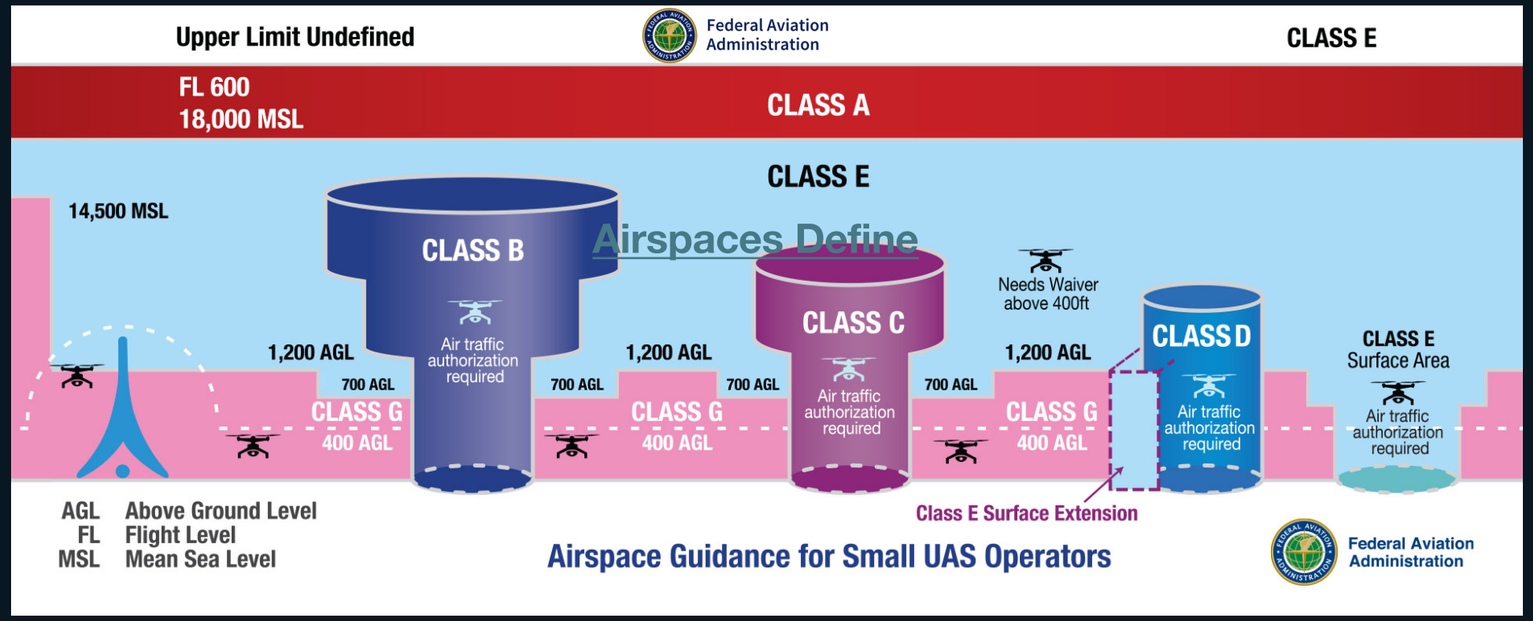
Sporting events generally restrict flight within 3 NM through 3,000 ft AGL, from 1 hour before to 1 hour after. Check the Sporting Event Automated Monitoring System (SEAMS) for real-time updates.

04 Fitness and judgment

Fly deliberately. Stay situationally aware. Never operate impaired, carelessly, or recklessly—and always remain within the limits of your authorization and applicable regulations.

LAANC approval does not supersede TFRs and other FAA regulations.

Airspace in three dimensions



Airspace 101

Airspaces Defined

B All three wedding-cake tiers are Class B. The shelves are individually tailored.

C Its own surface core and outer shelf at a separate airport.

D A separate surface area around a towered airport; dimensions vary.

E / G Class E floors vary. Class G exists where controlled airspace does not reach.

AIRSPACE CLASSES AND DEFFINITIONS

Examples

Class	Definition
Class A	Controlled high-altitude airspace, generally from 18,000 feet MSL through Flight Level 600. Drone operations are generally prohibited.
Class B	Controlled airspace surrounding the nation’s busiest airports. Its individually tailored layers often resemble an upside-down wedding cake. Drone pilots need FAA authorization before operating in it.
Class C	Controlled airspace around airports with an operational control tower, radar approach control, and qualifying traffic levels. It commonly has a surface core and an outer shelf, although dimensions vary. Drone pilots need FAA authorization.
Class D	Controlled airspace surrounding airports with an operational control tower. Its dimensions are individually tailored and normally extend from the surface to a published altitude. Drone pilots need FAA authorization.
Class E	Controlled airspace that is not Class A, B, C, or D. Its floor may begin at the surface or at a published altitude. Authorization is required inside surface Class E designated for an airport.
Class G	Airspace that has not been designated as controlled airspace. Part 107 pilots generally do not need ATC authorization, but all other operating rules and restrictions still apply.

Pilots must check current sectional charts, FAA airspace tools, NOTAMs, TFRs, and authorization conditions for the exact location, altitude, date, and time.

When airspace authorization is required

Check the airspace at the exact location, altitude and time of the operation.

Class B, C, D or airport surface Class E

Prior FAA/ATC authorization

LAANC where available; otherwise DroneZone. Receive approval before operating. Where LAANC is not available direct coordination with local ATC may be required per waiver instructions.

Class G

No ATC authorization required

Other FAA rules, TFRs and restrictions still apply. Avoid airport traffic.

Federal Aviation Administration
FAADroneZone

Airspace Authorization: KTRK Zone

Reference number: [redacted]
Submitted By: [redacted]
Approved Start Date: 09/01/2025
Approved End Date: 09/30/2026

Approved

Approved on 08/07/2025

Attachments

FAA Form 7711-1 2024-P107-W[redacted]

DESCRIPTION: Approval Document

ADDED BY: FAA

Responsible Party

Stakeholder ID[redacted]

NAME
[redacted]

PART 107 ACCOUNT NAME
[redacted]

PRIMARY EMAIL
[redacted]

PHONE
(530) 448-1029

Operation Parameters

KTRK Zone

START DATE
09/01/2025

END DATE
09/30/2026

TIMEFRAME
Sunrise to noon
Noon to 4 PM
4 PM to sunset

FREQUENCY
Monthly

LOCAL TIME ZONE
Pacific Standard Time (PST) [UTC-8]

PROPOSED MAXIMUM FLIGHT ALTITUDE ABOVE GROUND LEVEL (AGL)
100 ft.

PROPOSED LOCATION OF OPERATION
Seeking approval to fly within the KTRK airspace near the airport. This would include properties to the immediate SW portions of the airport near the Soaring Way Street to Highway 267. No operations would take place in any of the flight paths for fixed wing, rotor wing or gliders

Location
FAA Identifier: TRK
Lat/Long: 39-19-12.2000N 120-08-22.5000W
39-19.203333N 120-08.375000W
39.3200556,-120.1395833
(estimated)
Elevation: 5904.3 ft. / 1799.6 m (surveyed)
Variation: 14E (2015)
From city: 2 miles E of TRUCKEE, CA
Time zone: UTC -7 (UTC -8 during Standard Time)
Zip code: 96161

LATITUDE

DEGREES	MINUTES	SECONDS
39	19	12

DIRECTION
N

LONGITUDE

DEGREES	MINUTES	SECONDS
120	8	22

DIRECTION
W

RADIUS	NEAREST AIRPORT	CLASS OF AIRSPACE
0.5 NM	KTRK	D

DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PROPOSED OPERATION
Reason for this: 1) I am on contract with Town of Truckee and the administration building is in close proximity to the airport (only a few blocks away) and I am requested to create aerial photos/footage of the admin building. 2) Other existing and newly developing commercial/residential units are being built within the same vicinity. Part of my job with Town of Truckee is ongoing documentation of the growth of the region for documentation/planning of both commercial and affordable housing structures. I currently have a COA for other regions of the Truckee airspace and have worked directly with ATC in the past when conducting operations.

Thank you for your consideration.

How does it work

Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAANC)

The FAA UAS Data Exchange is an innovative, collaborative approach between government and private industry facilitating the sharing of airspace data between the two parties.

Under the FAA UAS Data Exchange umbrella, the agency will support multiple partnerships, the first of which is the **Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAANC)**.

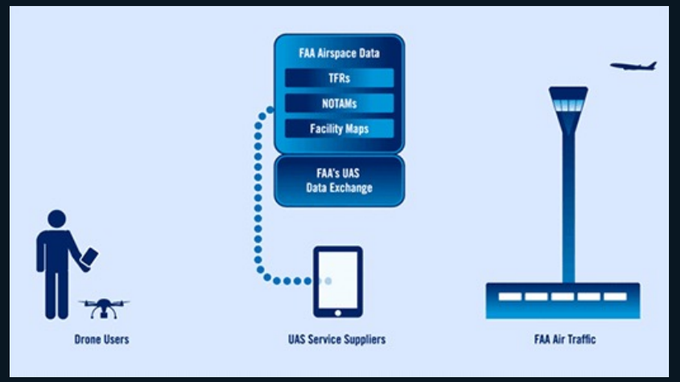
What is LAANC?
LAANC is the Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability, a collaboration between FAA and Industry. It directly supports UAS integration into the airspace.

LAANC provides:

- Drone pilots with access to controlled airspace at or below 400 feet.
- Awareness of where pilots can and cannot fly.
- Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) information and updates to the Special Use Airspace (SUA) schedule.
- Air Traffic Professionals with visibility into where and when drones will operate.

Through the UAS Data Exchange, the capability facilitates the sharing of airspace data between the FAA and companies approved by the FAA to provide LAANC services. The companies are known as UAS Service Suppliers — and the desktop applications and mobile apps to utilize the LAANC capability are provided by the UAS Service Suppliers (USS).

Drone pilots planning to fly under 400 feet in controlled airspace around airports must receive an airspace authorization from the FAA before they fly.



Source https://www.faa.gov/uas/getting_started/laanc

LAANC

Digital access to controlled airspace at participating airports

Pilot request

Location, date, time and altitude

→

Approved supplier

Mobile or desktop app from an FAA-approved USS

→

FAA airspace checks

Grid values, restrictions and authorization criteria

Eligible requests may receive near-real-time authorization. Submission alone never grants permission.

PARTICIPATING AIRPORTS ONLY

A practical LAANC request

01 **Choose an approved supplier**

Start from the FAA's current public supplier list. Create a profile and select the correct operating rule.

02 **Draw the full flight area**

Find the site and outline the operation. Review every intersected grid and verify LAANC availability.

03 **Set the operation window**

Enter the flight date, start/end times and time zone. Request only the maximum AGL altitude needed.

04 **Review and submit**

Check pilot details, site geometry and restrictions. At/below-grid requests may qualify for automated review.

05 **Read the authorization**

Wait for approval. Save its reference and review its area, altitude, times and special conditions.

06 **Recheck before launch**

Check current restrictions and weather independently. Follow the approval and update plans if needed. TFRs or other restrictions supersede LAANC approval.

Request LAANC Authorization

Cancel

Who will fly?

OPERATOR

Leve, Court

When & how long?

DATE

09/04/2026

TIME

04:24pm PDT

DURATION

2h 0m

How high will you fly?

HEIGHT

100ft

Eligible for auto-approval up to 300ft.

Recreational or Commercial?

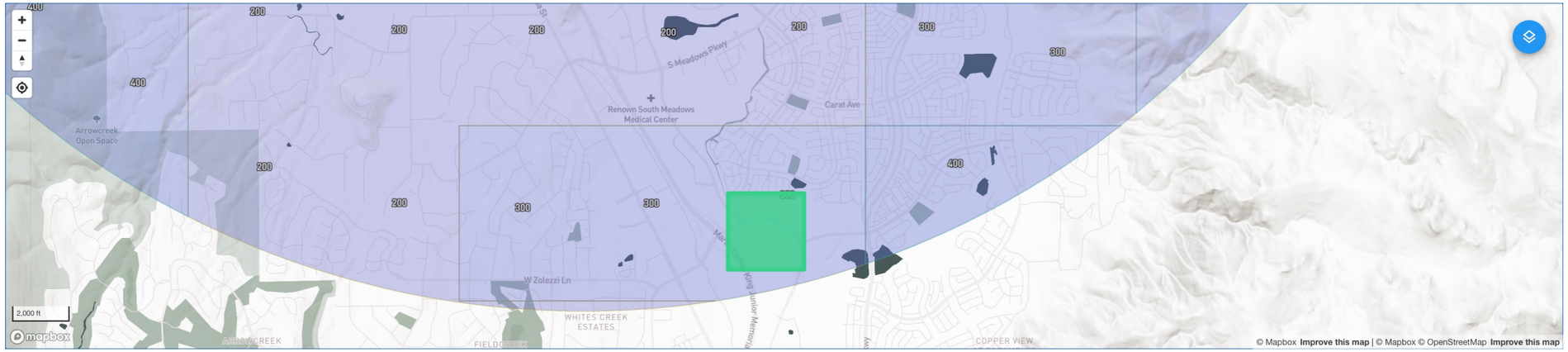
AUTHORIZATION TYPE

Commercial (107)

Location

DELETE

GEOJSON Upload



Notes

- Authorizations can be made up to 90 days in advance.
- Each authorization can be made for up to 12 hours in duration and 10 nautical miles in area.
- All civil twilight operations require anti-collision lighting visible for at least 3 statute miles that has a flash rate sufficient to avoid a collision.
- Operators may have up to 5 overlapping approved authorizations within 100 nautical miles of each other.

Pre - Check Results



Eligible for Auto-Approval

AUTHORIZING AIRPORT:

RNO

AIRSPACE CLASS:

Class C

START DATE & TIME:

09/04/2026 4:27pm PDT

END DATE & TIME:

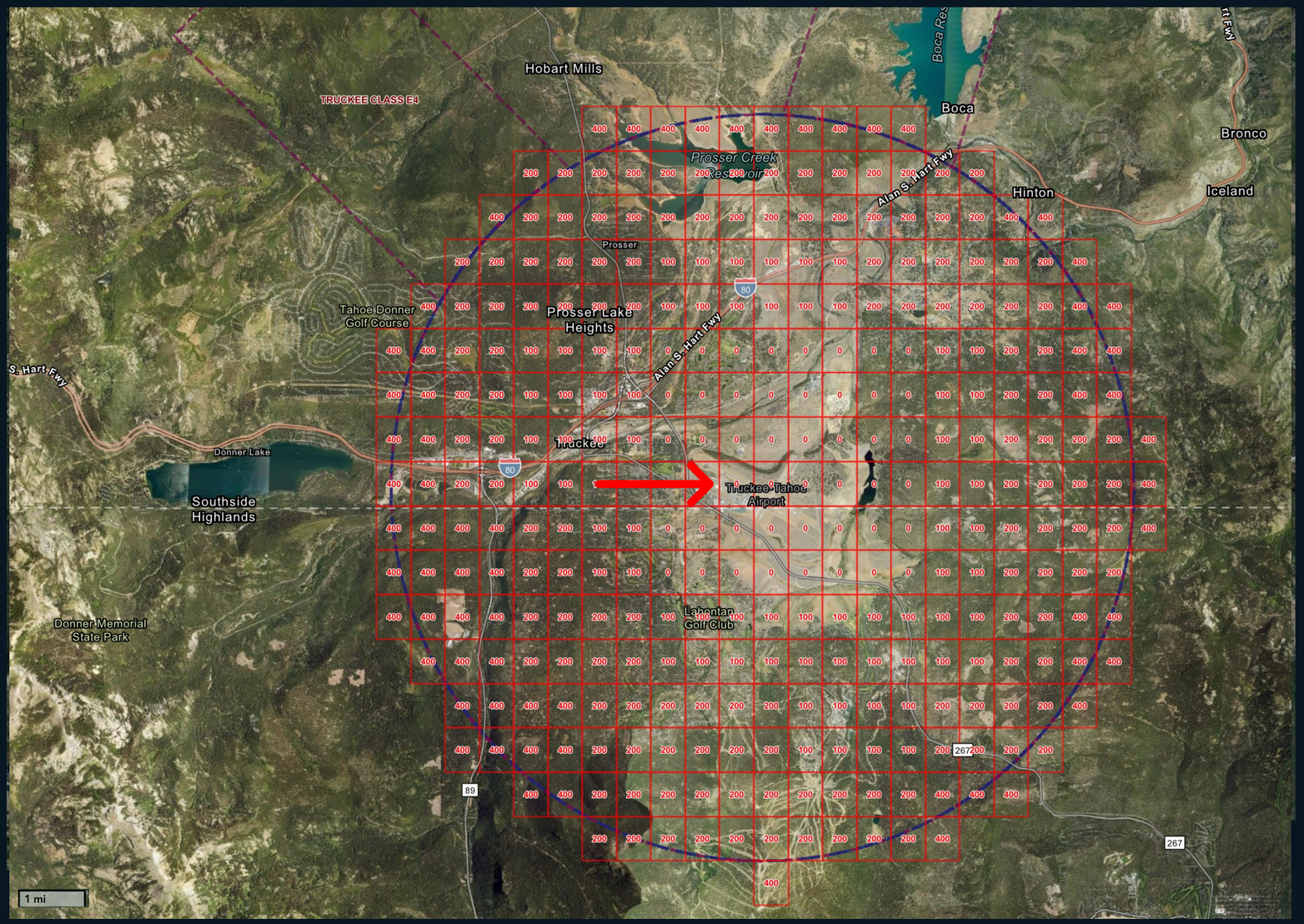
09/04/2026 6:25pm PDT

DURATION:

118 minutes

LAANC authorizations are for operations in controlled airspace. If your flight plan covers both controlled and uncontrolled airspace (by time or location), only the proposed area of operation within the controlled airspace will be submitted to the FAA.

Truckee Tahoe Airport · FAA Grid Map



ALL VALUES FEET AGL

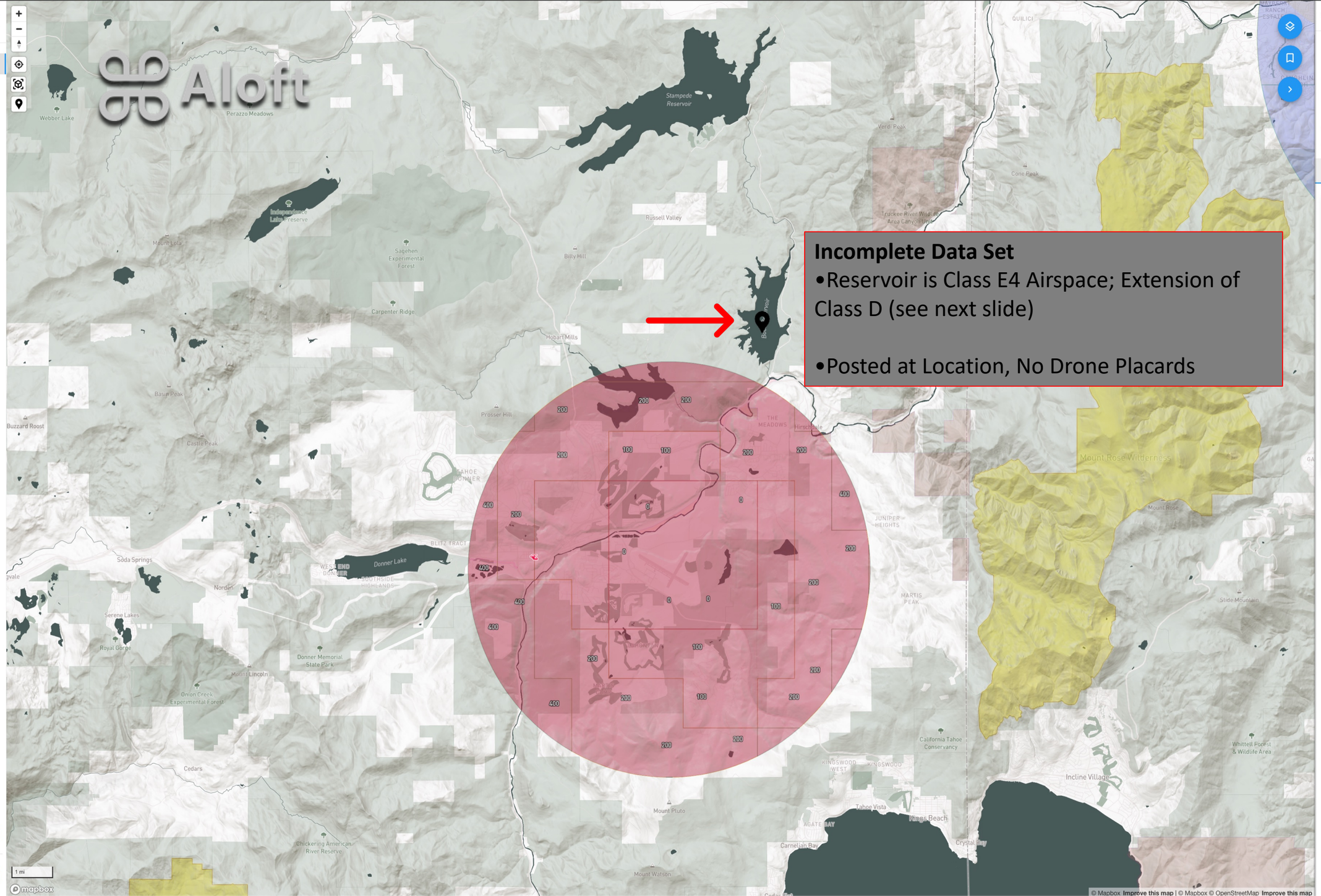
AGL = above ground level

0 100 200 400

Planning / authorization reference values

Grid values are not themselves authorization to fly.

TRK is not LAANC-enabled in the current FAA dataset. Use DroneZone for controlled-airspace authorization.



Incomplete Data Set

- Reservoir is Class E4 Airspace; Extension of Class D (see next slide)
- Posted at Location, No Drone Placards

Search for a Location

LAT: 39.399797

LONG: -120.097871

⚠1 60°F

Create or request a new:

LAANC MISSION

AIRSPACE WEATHER

Truckee River Wildlife Area

Truckee River Wildlife Area is a California Department of Fish & Wildlife property designated for the preservation of wildlife. Drone operations are prohibited on all California Department of Fish and Wildlife properties without a special use permit issued by the Department. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) shall not issue Special Use Permits for activities or uses that conflict with the current uses, management or purposes of a department land, would have a significant environmental effect, or would constitute an unlawful use of state resources under Government Code Section 8314. State and federal agencies with proposed projects need to coordinate with the CDFW UAS Coordinator and area managers for project review and approval. Recreational drone use is typically not a compatible activity.

1.09 mi

Find address or place

KTRK Airspace — Part 107 Quick Reference

CLASS D — Surface to 8,400' MSL
- Active during tower operating hours
- **FAA airspace authorization required**

CLASS E2 — Surface Area
- Replaces Class D when applicable outside tower hours
- Covers approximately **4.2 NM around KTRK**
- **FAA airspace authorization required**

CLASS E4 — Surface Extensions
- Extends **north and northwest** from the airport
- Protects IFR arrival/departure routes
- **Part 107 airspace authorization NOT required solely for E4**

CLASS E5 — Begins at 700' AGL
- Protects IFR operations around KTRK
- Below 700' is generally Class G where not covered by D/E2/E4
- **No §107.41 authorization required below the E5 floor**

PART 107 RULE OF THUMB

D + E2 = Authorization required

E4 + E5 = No §107.41 authorization required solely because of those designations

Always check current airspace, TFRs, NOTAMs and the specific conditions of any FAA authorization before flight.

TRUCKEE CLASS E4

TRUCKEE CLASS E4

RENO CLASS E3

RENO CLASS E3

Reno RC Club - Washoe County Hwy 202; 700 ft

Washoe Waterdogs - Washoe Lake State Park; 700 ft

Sierra Silent Squirrels - US 395; 700 ft

High Sierra RC Club - Remote Control Rd; 700 ft

Class E4 Airspace

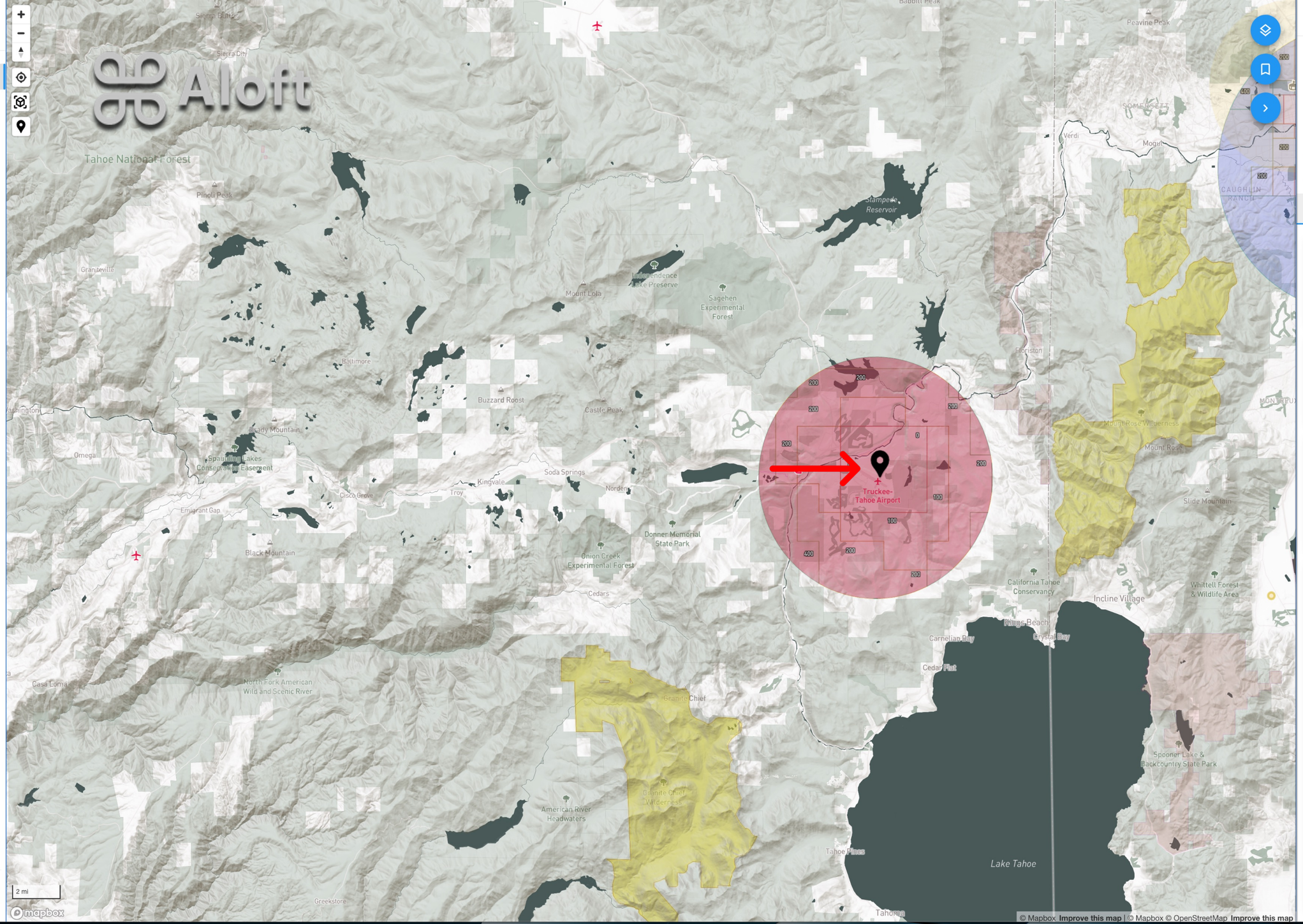
Zoom to

Identifier	TRK
Name	TRUCKEE CLASS E4
Description of the Upper Limit Value	AA
Upper Limit Value	-9,998
Upper Limit Unit of Measure	
Code for the Upper Limit	
Description of the Lower Limit Value	
Lower Limit Value	0
Lower Limit Unit of Measure	FT
Code for the Lower Limit	SFC
Type Code	CLASS
Local Type	CLASS_E4
Class	E
Military Code	CIVIL
Name of the Communication Outlet	
Level of the Airspace	L
Sector	
Onshore	1
Exclusion Area	0
Work Hour Code	H24
Work Hour Remarks	
Daylight Saving Time Code	
GMT Offset	
Controlling Agent	
City	TRUCKEE

39°25'18.0"N 120°05'56.6"W

5 mi

California State Parks, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS | Federal Aviation Administration / ATO / System Operation Security, AJR-2 | FAA/Aviation Safety (AVS) F... Powered by Esri



Search for a Location

LAT: 39.320392

LONG: -120.136404

⚠4 KTRK | Class D | 57°F |

Create or request a new:

LAANC MISSION

AIRSPACE WEATHER

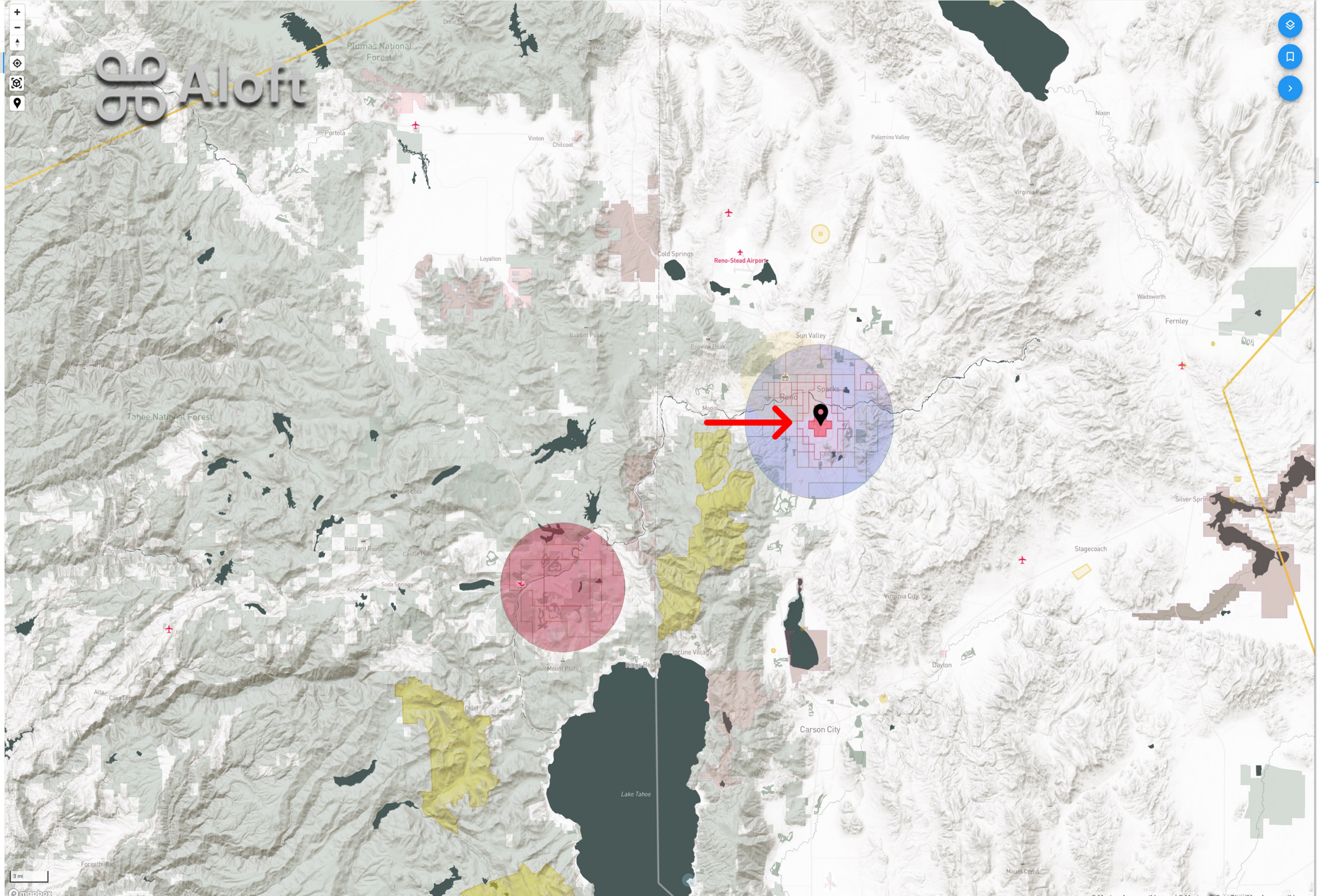
TRUCKEE CLASS D
Class: D

UAS Facility Map
LAANC inactive

Truckee-Tahoe
KTRK
0.17 mi

Truckee River Wildlife Area
Truckee River Wildlife Area is a California Department of Fish & Wildlife property designated for the preservation of wildlife. Drone operations are prohibited on all California Department of Fish and Wildlife properties without a special use permit issued by the Department. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) shall not issue Special Use Permits for activities or uses that conflict with the current uses, management or purposes of a department land, would have a significant environmental effect, or would constitute an unlawful use of state resources under Government Code Section 8314. State and federal agencies with proposed projects need to coordinate with the CDFW UAS Coordinator and area managers for project review and approval. Recreational drone use is typically not a compatible activity.

1.01 mi
20



Search for a Location

LAT: 39.49466

LONG: -119.76578

⚠8 | KRNO | Class C | 71°F |

Create or request a new:

LAANC | MISSION

AIRSPACE | WEATHER

RENO CANNON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CLASS C
Class: C

UAS Facility Map
LAANC inactive

Reno/Tahoe Intl
KRNO
0.33 mi

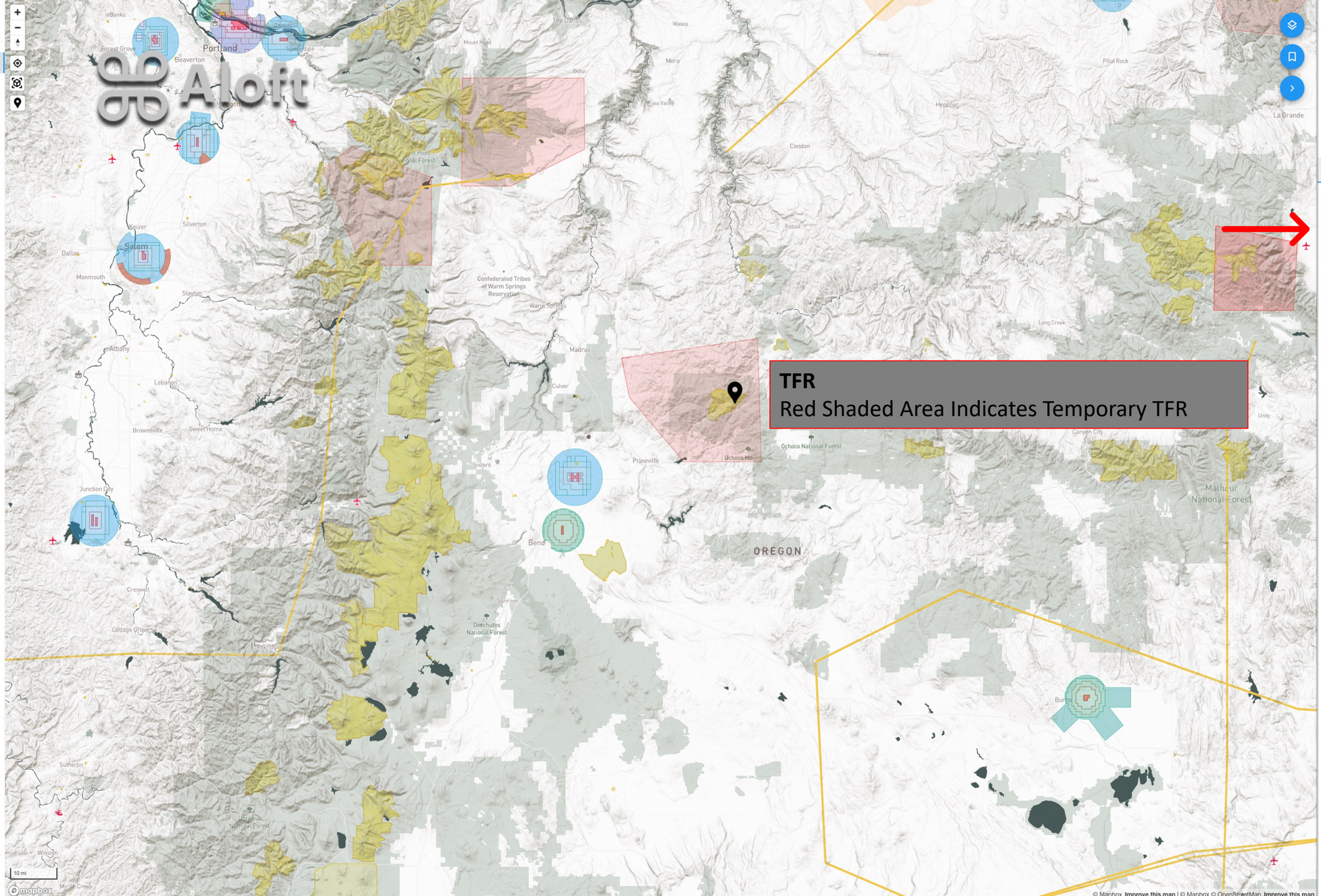
DOD NSUFR
Base: 152 AW, Reno ANGB, Reno Tahoe IAP, NV
0.43 mi

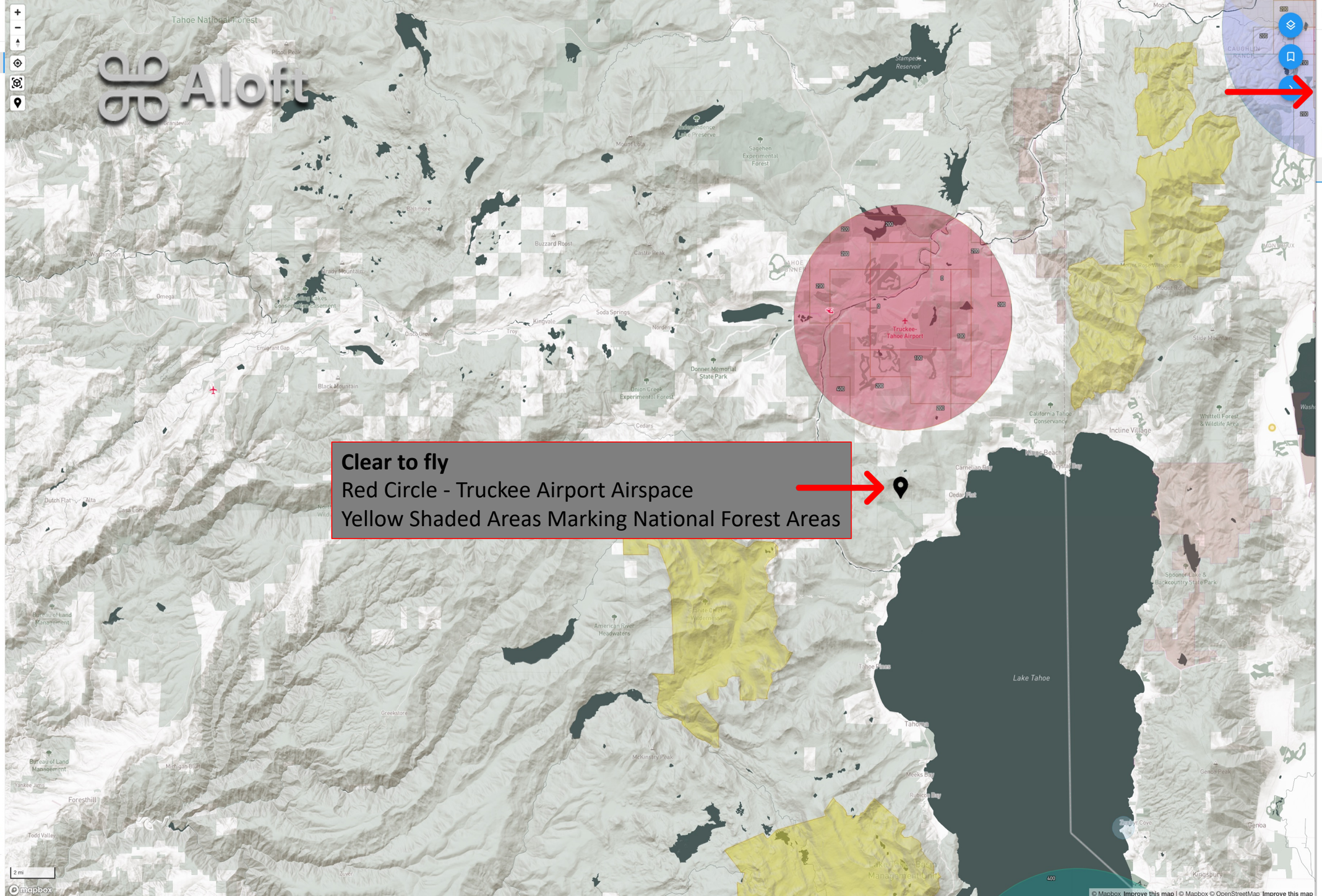
Remsa/Care Flight
0.9 mi

Air Force @ Nevada
1.11 mi

Northern Nevada Sierra Medical Center
2 mi

Renown Rgnl Medical Center
21
2.63 mi


Aloft
TFR
Red Shaded Area Indicates Temporary TFR
Search for a Location
LAT: 44.472781
LONG: -120.464168
3
53°F
Create or request a new:
LAANC
MISSION
AIRSPACE
WEATHER
FDC 6/9463 FIREFIGHTING
Ends in 1 week
FS Wilderness Areas
This is a wilderness area. Drone use (commercial and personal takeoff and landing) is prohibited within all wilderness areas.
Mill Creek Wilderness
OREGON
Portland
Salem
Bend
Prineville
Madras
Condon
Pilot Rock
Hepner
La Grande
Ochoco National Forest
Deschutes National Forest
Malheur National Forest
Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation
Ochoco Mountains
Canyon City
Long Creek
Unity
Burns
Sisters
Sunriver
Redmond
Madras
Culver
Warm Springs
Lebanon
Albany
Sweet Home
Brownsville
Junction City
Creswell
Cottage Grove
Sutherlin
Winston
Myrtle Creek
Dallas
Monmouth
Keizer
Silverton
Beaverton
Forest Grove
Banks
Gresham
Troutdale
The Dalles
Wasco
Mount Hood
Moro
Dufur
Grass Valley
Fossil
Spray
Monument
Ukiah
10 mi
mapbox
© Mapbox Improve this map | © Mapbox © OpenStreetMap Improve this map



Search for a Location

LAT: 39.207579

LONG: -120.141621

⚠0 51°F

Create or request a new:

LAANC MISSION

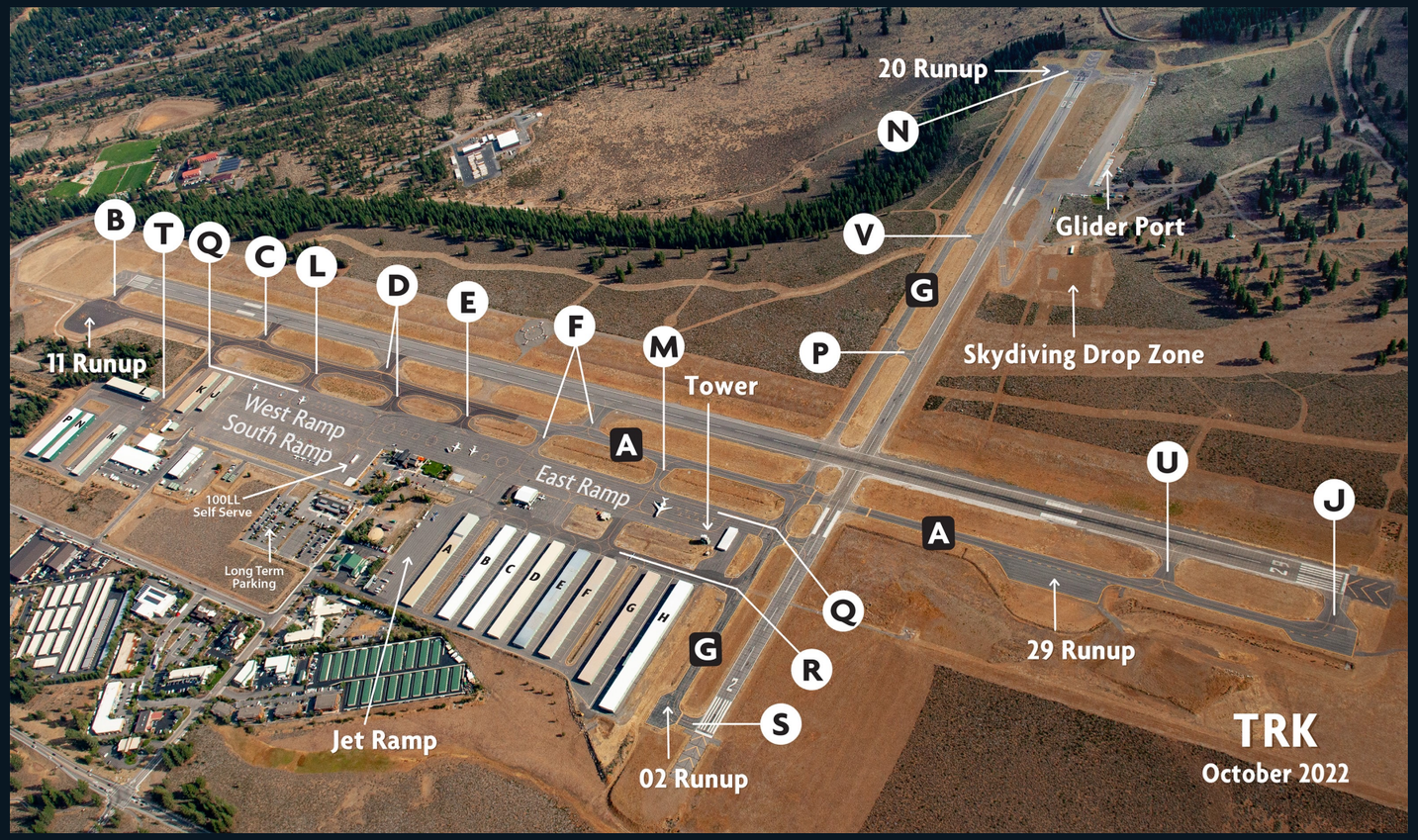
AIRSPACE WEATHER

Let's Fly!

There are no advisories in the area. It's safe to fly.

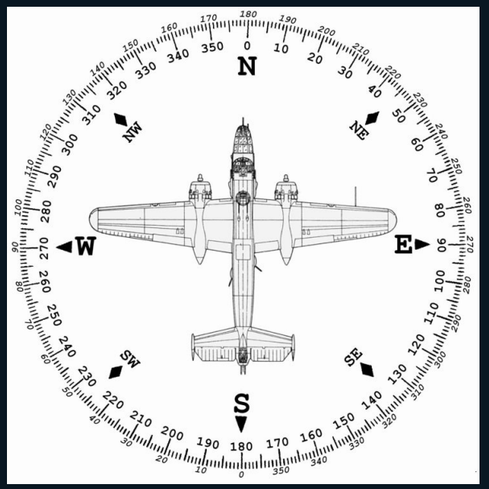
Note: Be aware of live flights around you

Truckee Tahoe Airport



Runway numbers indicate the **approximate magnetic compass heading** an aircraft is traveling when using that runway. The heading is rounded to the nearest 10° and the last zero is removed.

Runway 11 → approximately **110°**, generally southeast
Runway 20 → approximately **200°**, generally south-southwest
Runway 2 (02) → approximately **020°**, generally north-northeast
Runway 29 → approximately **290°**, generally west-northwest



It’s easy to have tunnel vision and lose situational awareness. Don’t rush, don’t let your friend or client push you beyond what you know you can legally do or are comfortable with. All decisions are *your* responsibility as the Pilot in Command.

Flying into power lines and cables: Thin wires are the number one cause of drone crashes because obstacle avoidance sensors often cannot detect them.

Draining the battery too low: Pushing power below 15% risks an automatic emergency landing over water or in unretrievable terrain.

Failing to update the home point: Typically, you can set your Return-to-Home from your takeoff location or follow your controller. *It’s important to understand all RTH settings and behavior.*

Disregarding weather and wind: High winds above safety thresholds can overpower your drone or blow it into obstacles. Winds may be stronger at higher elevations.

Situational awareness: Losing track of where the drone is. Know your surroundings and always having a plan. Watch and listen for aircraft in the area. Emergency helicopters can be unpredictable and don’t always follow normal traffic patterns.

Ignoring airspace regulations: Flying in restricted zones without proper authorization or LAANC approval can result in heavy fines or confiscated gear.

Using Sport Mode carelessly: Sport mode turns off obstacle avoidance and increases braking distance, and in general all controls are sped up.

Skipping pre-flight checks: Forgetting to remove gimbal covers, checking for cracked propellers, or failing to secure the battery or props tightly causes immediate trouble.

Provoking territorial birds: Birds view drones as intruders and frequently attack them; ignoring aggressive bird behavior leads to lost aircraft. Do not chase wildlife.

Flying beyond your ability: Thinking you “got it". Listening to others- you are responsible for making all decisions.

LIVE LINKS

Flight-planning resources (FAA UAS Homepage)

01 **Become a Certified Remote Pilot**
Requirements for Remote Pilot Certification

02 **FAA-approved LAANC suppliers**
Current services and capabilities

03 **FAA TFRs and NOTAMs**
Temporary restrictions and notices

04 **FAA stadium / SEAMS guidance**
Covered sporting events

05 **Aviation Weather Center**
Observations and forecasts

06 **FAA DroneZone**
Registration and airspace requests

07 **FAA Aviation Safety Hub**
New operational waiver applications

08 **FAA pilot certification**
IACRA, testing and recurrent training

09 **FAA UAS Facility Maps**
Published grid values

10 **eCFR Part 107**
Code of Federal Regulations

FAA Chapter 11. Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)

IN THE NEWS

Increase In Drone Incidents- Drones Ground Emergency Operations (FAA Digital Toolkit)

EYEWITNESS NEWS 24/7 Live | Los Angeles | Orange County | Inland Empire | Ventura County

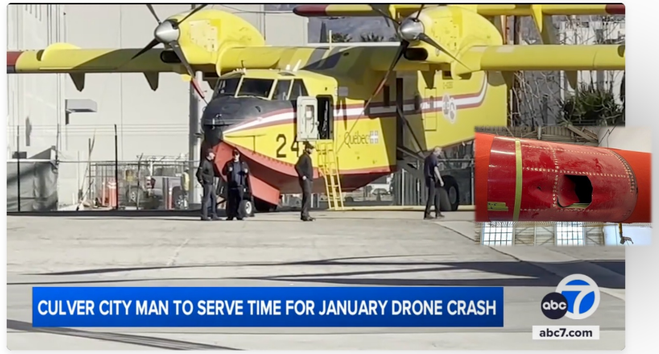
TRACTOR SUPPLY CO. LABOR DAY SAVINGS 25% off

PALISADES FIRE

Culver City man who crashed drone into Super Scooper gets 2 weeks in prison, 1 month home detention

CNS

Tuesday, September 16, 2025



A computer game developer who admitted operating a drone that crashed into and damaged a Super Scooper firefighting aircraft battling the Palisades Fire was sentenced to a mix of prison and home detention.

PACIFIC PALISADES, LOS ANGELES (CNS) -- A game developer who admitted operating a drone that crashed into and damaged a Super Scooper firefighting aircraft battling the Palisades Fire was sentenced Monday to a mix of prison and home detention.

Peter Tripp Akemann, 57, of Culver City, pleaded guilty in February to a federal class-A misdemeanor count of unsafe operation of an unmanned aircraft, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

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EMERGENCY LANDING

LAPD helicopter makes emergency landing after being hit by drone at Encino brush fire, police say

The mayor had a no-holds-barred message for the drone operator, saying they will be arrested and prosecuted if they are found.

By Leo Stallworth

Tuesday, July 7, 2026

Este artículo se ofrece en Español



As crews battled a brush fire near the Encino Reservoir on Tuesday, a drone reportedly hit a police helicopter, forcing an emergency landing.

ENCINO, LOS ANGELES (KABC) -- As crews battled a brush fire near the Encino Reservoir on Tuesday afternoon, prompting evacuation warnings for residents, a drone reportedly hit a police helicopter, forcing an emergency landing.

The eight-acre brush fire came dangerously close to homes near the reservoir and Sepulveda Basin. It was first reported shortly before 12:30 p.m. in the 4500 block of North Encino Avenue, south of Ventura Boulevard, according to the Los Angeles Fire Department.

USDA Forest Service
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Busy airspace

Record number of consumer drones are keeping firefighters grounded

Andrew Avitt
Office of Communication
April 23, 2026



Note: While unauthorized drones in restricted airspace can halt firefighting air operations, the Forest Service is increasingly incorporating uncrewed aerial systems in wildfire operations. From 2019 to 2025 the Forest Service has increased drone flights by 2,483% on active incidents (*Forest Service photo by Dirk Giles*)

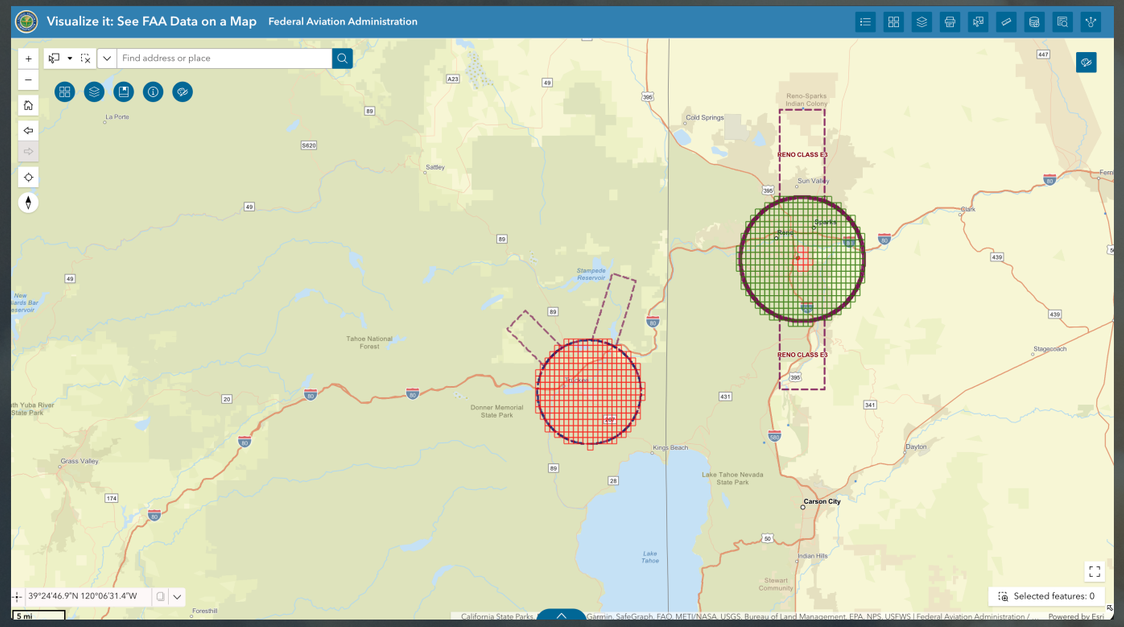
Drones, also referred to as uncrewed aerial systems or UAS, have been increasingly complicating airspace around wildfires since the first consumer models came to market in 2013.

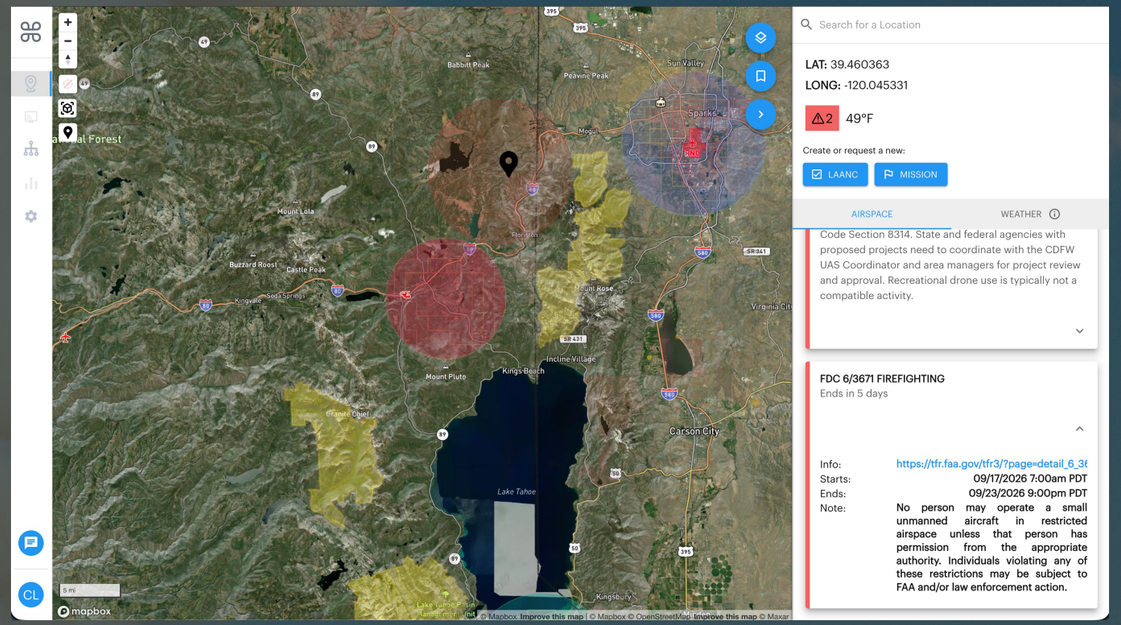
These mechanical critters of the sky are a nuisance to wildland firefighting when they are operating unauthorized in restricted airspace, putting pilots, their crews, and aircraft at risk.

When unauthorized drones are sighted, the fire manager must shut down the airspace for all air operations supporting the wildland fire suppression for safety reasons. This means crucial aerial firefighting and lifesaving capabilities – like air medevac and fire suppression aircraft – can't fly. People could die and more buildings and forest could burn when someone flies their unauthorized drone in restricted airspace.

In 2025, there were 218 drone sightings over active wildfires. Most of these occurred during last year's Eaton and Palisades Fires in Los Angeles where 184 drone incursions were reported within the restricted airspace set up around the active fires.

It Is YOUR Responsibility To Know If TFRs Are In Place





Recent real-world example Floriston, CA wildfire started September 18th, 2026. On the left, the FAA UAS Facility Map. On the right, Air Control. The FAA UAS map does not show the TFR. You can see the TFR area on the Air Control map northeast of Truckee on the right. TFRs are not immediate in an emergency. If aircraft are/could be in the area during an emergency-DO NOT FLY. Drone activity can result in all air operations being suspended until the area is deemed safe to fly. This can delay firefighting efforts, lead to loss of property or even death that could have been avoided. Don't let excitement override safety.

It is imperative to utilize all available resources and understand your responsibility.

If You Fly We Can't

When everything is running smooth, operating a drone is rewarding, safe task. *Plan for what can go wrong*.

Good behavior: Don't be invasive to your surroundings, both human and wildlife. You are an ambassador for drone operators. Respect privacy even if the area is legal to fly.

Wildfires/Emergency Services: Even if a TFR has not been established for a new fire or emergency, use common sense. If air assets are or will be in use, don't fly. **A drone on scene will ground ALL air operations until the airspace is deemed clear.** You could face fines or other charges for flying in restricted airspaces.

Ever changing information: Online resources are constantly changing. It's imperative to stay up-to-date with current information. Nobody will contact you and tell you anything has changed- it's up to you.

Local ATC: If you don't have an appropriate waiver via FAA, local ATC is not permitted to authorize your operation.

Slow down: Take a few extra minutes to ensure you've checked your gear and surroundings fully.

Geofencing: DJI has removed geofencing. Previously in no-fly zones, i.e. proximity to an airport, you would not be able to takeoff. With geofencing removed you can virtually takeoff anywhere you want. It is your responsibility to know where you are and what's allowed.

Hand launching and landing: This is a skill that should be taken seriously. The props can cut you to the bone or cause blindness if they hit your eyes.

Battery health and travel: Lithium batteries degrade over time. In the heat or as they age, they can swell. They need to be disposed of. If traveling on commercial airlines, they may not be checked in your luggage-they need to stay with you in the cabin.

Insurance: If you plan on operating commercially, general liability insurance is highly recommended. Policies usually also cover loss or theft.

Learn to fly via monitor: Learn to fly primarily from your on-screen data and image. Looking back and forth from screen to drone can be difficult. Learn your instruments.

Frequently Used Acronyms

LAANC — Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability · controlled-airspace authorization through approved suppliers

TFR — Temporary Flight Restriction · a regulatory restriction issued through the NOTAM system

NOTAM — Notice to Airmen · time-critical information about abnormal NAS conditions, hazards or changes

TAF — Terminal Aerodrome Forecast · expected aviation weather near an airport; “TAFF” is a common misspelling

METAR — Meteorological Aerodrome Report · a coded current surface-weather observation

VLOS — Visual Line of Sight · unaided sight sufficient to know the aircraft’s position, attitude and movement

AGL — Above Ground Level · height measured from the surface beneath the aircraft

MSL — Mean Sea Level · altitude referenced to average sea level, as used on charts and for elevation

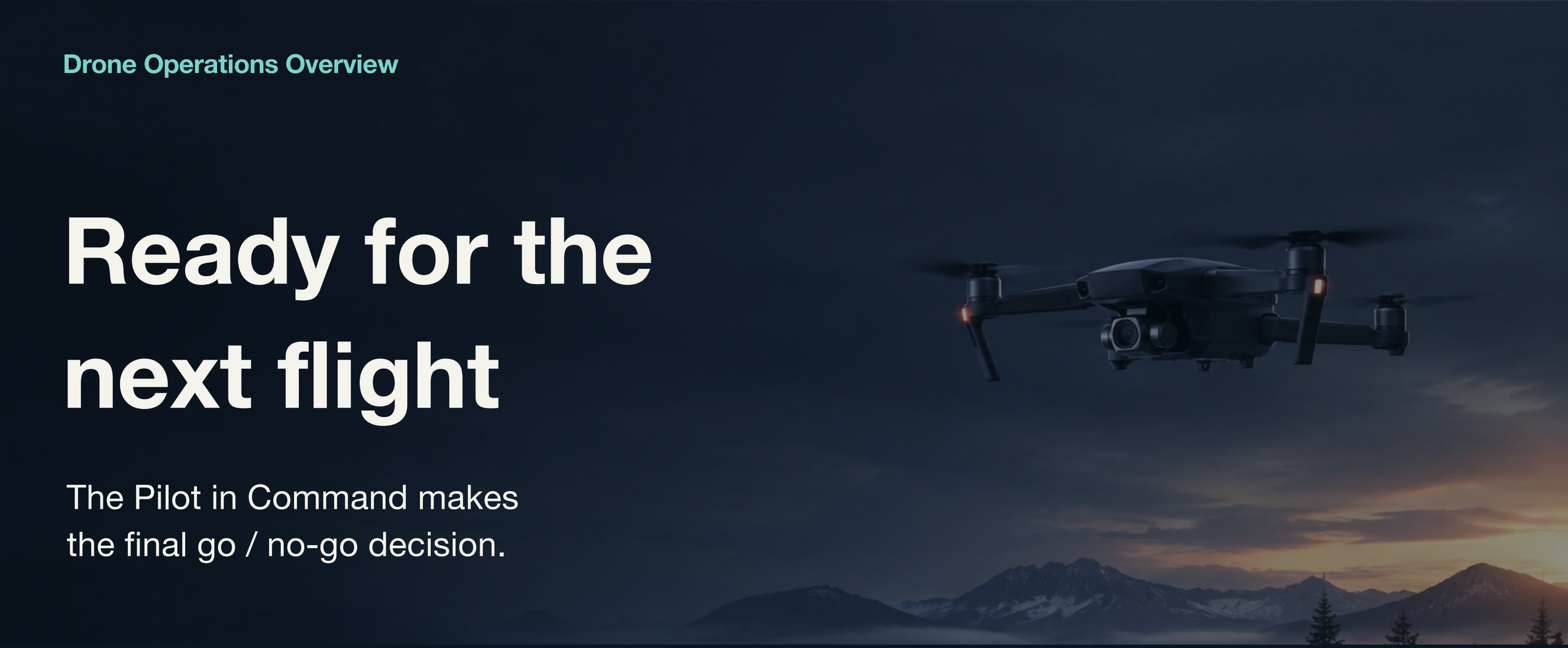
IACRA — Integrated Airman Certification and Rating Application · FAA’s online airman-certificate system

UAS — Unmanned Aircraft System

Complete FAA Abbreviations/Acronyms

Drone Operations Overview

Ready for the next flight



The Pilot in Command makes the final go / no-go decision.

Always Contact the FAA Directly With Questions and to Ensure Accuracy

This presentation is general information only and is not a substitute for current FAA regulations, official guidance, airspace authorizations, or legal advice. Aviation rules, airspace restrictions, procedures, and operating requirements may change at any time. This is not a comprehensive set of FAA regulations. Always check appropriate resources before any operation. The Pilot in Command is solely responsible for verifying current requirements and ensuring each operation complies with all applicable federal, state, local, and site-specific rules, regulations, restrictions, and required authorizations.