



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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April 5, 2007

Mr. Nicholas Sabatini
Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

RE: Notice of Policy on Unmanned Aircraft Operations in the National Airspace System;
Docket No. FAA-2006-25714

Dear Mr. *Nicky* Sabatini,

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), on behalf of more than 411,000 members nationwide, supports the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) initial policy guidance establishing a framework for the standards and regulations needed to allow unmanned aircraft (UA) operations in the National Airspace System (NAS). The Notice of Policy is a much-needed first step; however, it is essential that the FAA move expeditiously to develop the regulatory standards necessary for UA operations. The standards should cover airworthiness certification as well as the airspace/air traffic regulatory requirements allowing these vehicles to operate in the NAS.

In a recent AOPA survey, nearly 95% of our members told us that UA's should be required to follow the same operating rules as manned aircraft. This means that the UA must have the ability to see and avoid manned aircraft, are able to immediately respond to ATC instructions, can demonstrate they are able to safely operate in the same airspace as manned aircraft and be certified to the same level as manned aircraft.

Many federal agencies and commercial operators are currently operating or seeking authority to operate UA's in the NAS. AOPA members are very concerned that UA operations currently require flight restrictions. Because these operations affect civil aviation, AOPA continues to support the collaborative efforts of the FAA and RTCA, Inc. working groups in developing recommendations for UA operations.

As the demand for UA operations continues to grow, the FAA must move forward in developing standards that promote their safe integration into the NAS in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Andrew V. Cebula
Executive Vice President
Government Affairs