

Drone Regulations in Nepal: A Complete Guide for Operators

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Based on the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal's Unmanned Aircraft System Requirements (UASR), Issue 01, and related government procedures.

1. Regulatory Authority

Drone (UAV/RPA/UAS) operations in Nepal are governed primarily by the **Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN)**, the country's independent civil aviation regulator, established in 1998 under the Civil Aviation Authority Act, 2053 (1996) and operating under the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

The core legal instrument is the **Unmanned Aircraft System Requirements (UASR)**, issued by CAAN under Rule 82 of the Civil Aviation Regulations, 2002 (2058 B.S.), with the current version dated April 2021. It supersedes the earlier CAAN Directive 07 on unmanned aircraft.

Two other bodies play a mandatory role for most non-trivial operations:

- **Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA)** — administers a separate RPA/Drone Working Procedure (2019) and issues security clearance, particularly for foreigners and for flights near sensitive areas.
- **Department of Tourism** — involved in authorizing drone use in trekking regions, conservation areas, and other tourism zones.

In practice, an operator often needs sign-off from CAAN, MOHA, local administration (District Administration Office / Chief District Officer), and local police, depending on where and what they are flying.

Important caveat: CAAN's regulatory documents are revised periodically, and this article reflects the requirements as published on CAAN's official channels. Operators should verify current requirements directly at caanepal.gov.np and drone.caanepal.gov.np before flying, since fees, forms, and procedures are updated from time to time.

2. Drone Weight Categories

Under UASR Requirement 101.5(b), every UAS is classified by **Maximum Take-Off Weight (MTOW)** into one of four categories, which determines the level of regulatory oversight:

Category	Risk Class	Weight Range
A	Very Low Risk	Less than 250 g
B	Low Risk	250 g – 2 kg
C	Regulated Low Risk	2 kg – 25 kg
D	Regulated High Risk	Above 25 kg

All categories fall under the "open category," which applies to unmanned aircraft with an MTOW of 25 kg or less, operated under standard conditions (Requirement 101.3–101.7). Aircraft above 25 kg gross mass are not permitted under Requirement 101.37 without separate arrangements.

3. Registration Requirement

Under **Requirement 101.5**, every person lawfully entitled to possess a UA operating in Nepal must register it and hold a valid **Certificate of Registration**, issued by CAAN (or a recognized equivalent foreign aeronautical authority under specific agreements).

Note: Registration alone does not authorize flight. As CAAN's own certificate states explicitly: *"This RPA/DRONE Certificate of Registration is not an authorization to conduct flight operations with an unmanned aircraft."* A separate flight permission is required for most operations.

Documents required for registration (Appendix I of UASR)

- Owner's name/company name, address, and contact details
- One recent passport-size colour photograph
- Drone details: manufacturer, model, serial number, manufacture date/year, type, payload type, take-off weight, colour, retailer name
- Copy of citizenship certificate, valid passport, or company registration certificate
- Copy of the drone's manual and specifications
- Colour photo of the drone showing model and serial number
- Statement of the purpose of operation
- Copy of VAT bill (if purchased in Nepal) or customs clearance certificate (if imported)

Upon successful registration, CAAN issues a **Unique Identification Number (UIN)**, which must be:

- Permanently marked or painted on the drone
- Displayed prominently, in a colour that contrasts with the drone's surface
- Kept clean and visible at all times

Additional requirements for foreign nationals

Based on CAAN's Flight Safety Standards Department (FSSD) documentation, foreign operators must additionally provide:

- Passport with a valid Nepali visa
- Tribhuvan International Airport customs declaration for the drone
- A registration fee (historically around USD 10 plus 13% VAT — confirm current rate with CAAN)
- A letter of commitment to comply with CAAN and MOHA UAV working procedures, stating the purpose, location, and duration of intended flights
- Valid insurance (mandatory for Category C and D drones, i.e., above 2 kg)
- Physical verification of the drone at CAAN's FSSD office (required for Category C and D)

Applications are submitted to the **Flight Safety Standards Department, CAAN, Sinamangal, Kathmandu**, or online via CAAN's drone registration portal.

4. Standard Operating Conditions (Requirement 101.7)

A drone is considered to be operating under "standard" conditions — the baseline for most recreational and low-risk commercial use — only if **all** of the following are true:

1. The drone stays within the operator's **visual line-of-sight (VLOS)** at all times.
2. It flies **at or below 100 metres (328 ft) AGL** and within **300 metres horizontal distance** from the pilot, during daylight only.
3. It stays at least **30 metres horizontally** from any uninvolved person.
4. It is **not** flown:
 - In a government-designated prohibited area
 - In a government-designated restricted area
 - Over a populated area
 - In any area or during any period specifically notified as off-limits by local, provincial, or federal authorities
 - Within **5 km of the movement area of any aerodrome** (airport)
5. It is not flown over an active fire, police, or emergency-response operation without the consent of the officer in charge.
6. The pilot controls only one drone at a time.

Operating outside these parameters (higher altitude, beyond visual line-of-sight, near airports, over crowds, at night, etc.) requires **additional, specific authorization from CAAN** and, in many cases, from ATC or the relevant airspace authority.

5. Airspace, No-Fly Zones, and Aerodrome Restrictions

- **Aerodromes (Requirement 101.23):** No drone may operate on or within **5 km** of a controlled or uncontrolled aerodrome without permission from the relevant ATS unit/aerodrome service provider. Even where permitted near an uncontrolled aerodrome, flights are capped at 100 m AGL, 15 minutes endurance, and 300 m horizontal range, and require a UA observer.
- **Controlled airspace (Requirement 101.13):** Requires prior ATS authorization, plus the pilot must hold a relevant radio qualification and maintain communication as directed.
- **Segregated airspace (Requirement 101.11):** Cannot be entered without approval from the administering authority.
- **Altitude ceiling:** Flights above 100 m (328 ft) AGL, or beyond 5 km of an aerodrome, require prior CAAN approval and — for flights above this altitude — at least **24 hours' advance notice** to the air navigation service provider so a NOTAM can be issued (Requirement 101.25(c)).
- **Weather and time-of-day limits (Requirement 101.29 & 101.31):** Flying into cloud, at night, or outside Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC) is prohibited unless separately authorized.

CAAN also references **Rules relating to Flight Regulation in Sensitive and Restricted Area, 2070**, which governs flights near sensitive government, military, and diplomatic sites — clearance from the concerned department is required for such operations.

6. Operating Near People and Property

- **Over people (Requirement 101.35):** A drone may not be flown directly over a person unless that person is participating in the operation, is under solid cover, or has given consent and remains at least 15 m away. Uninvolved bystanders must otherwise be kept at least 30 m away, measured horizontally.
 - **Dropping objects (Requirement 101.19):** Deliberately dropping anything from a drone in flight is prohibited if it creates a hazard to people or property.
 - **Right-of-way (Requirement 101.33):** Drones must always give way to and stay clear of manned aircraft, both on the ground and in flight.
 - **Careless or reckless operation (Requirement 101.43):** Flying in a manner that endangers aviation safety, people, or property is prohibited outright — including operating a drone while simultaneously driving a vehicle, vessel, or piloting a manned aircraft.
 - **Privacy:** Government directives specifically prohibit filming or surveillance that infringes on personal privacy, even for drones under 2 kg exempted from prior permission (per CAAN's UAV Directive provisions).
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7. Remote Pilot Licensing

For operations that exceed standard/basic conditions — heavier drones, higher altitude, or near-aerodrome flying — a **Remote Pilot Licence (RPL)** issued by CAAN is required (Subpart C, Requirements 102.1–102.11).

Eligibility (Requirement 102.2)

An applicant must:

- Be at least **18 years old**
- Have completed **Class 12 (or equivalent) education**
- Complete a CAAN-recognized **remote pilot training course** for the relevant UA category
- Pass a **flight test** conducted by CAAN, where required
- Demonstrate competence operating the relevant UA type and control station
- Meet **medical fitness** standards as prescribed

Conditions typically attached to a licence

- Authorization may be restricted to a specific drone make/model
- Operating area may be geographically limited
- Flight may be restricted to VMC only
- Pilots must fly within visual line-of-sight
- A licence holder may operate only **one** drone at a time
- Flying above 100 m AGL or within 5 km of an aerodrome additionally requires an aeronautical radio operator certificate, flight crew licence, air traffic control licence, or equivalent military qualification

CAAN can suspend or cancel a licence through a formal "show cause" process (Requirements 102.9–102.11) if there is reasonable evidence of regulatory violation, negligent operation, or reckless endangerment.

Alcohol and drugs (Requirement 101.45)

No person may act as remote pilot, crew member, or observer within **8 hours** of consuming alcohol, while under its influence, or while impaired by any drug affecting flight safety.

8. Accident and Incident Reporting

Under **Requirement 101.009**, a remote pilot must report to CAAN, within **48 hours**, any operation resulting in:

- Injury to any person, or
- Damage to property other than the drone itself

CAAN and its officials also retain the right to inspect the UAS, examine licences and records, and require demonstration of compliance at any time (Requirement 101.007).

9. Restricted and Sensitive Areas — Special Cases

Certain locations carry additional layers of permission beyond the standard CAAN process:

- **Conservation and protected areas** (e.g., Annapurna Conservation Area): drone use requires clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Tourism, CAAN, **and** the relevant conservation area authority. Research or study use additionally requires permission from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation.
- **National parks:** the park administration typically acts as the local approving authority for permitted flights, generally capped around 200 ft, with permits often valid for a limited period (historically reported as roughly three months, though this should be reconfirmed with the specific park office).
- **Near airports, military installations, and other sensitive government sites:** governed by the Flight Regulation in Sensitive and Restricted Area Rules, 2070, requiring specific departmental clearance in addition to CAAN authorization.

Because these overlapping jurisdictions change based on location and purpose, operators planning to fly in conservation areas, near international borders, or near government/military infrastructure should contact the relevant local authority and CDO office directly, well before the planned flight.

10. Penalties for Non-Compliance

Operating a drone without the required registration and/or flight permission is a punishable offence. CAAN documentation explicitly states that any person or entity found operating a drone without CAAN permission is subject to punishment under the **Civil Aviation Authority Act, 2053**, and its enforcement provisions. Penalties can include confiscation of the drone, fines, and other enforcement action determined case-by-case by CAAN and, where relevant, MOHA and local security agencies.

Falsifying registration or licence records is separately prohibited under Requirement 101.005 and can result in denial, suspension, or revocation of a certificate or licence.

11. Practical Summary for Different Use Cases

Use case	Key requirements
Hobbyist, drone < 250 g, private property, low altitude	Lowest regulatory burden (Category A), but registration and general safety rules still apply; privacy rules always apply
Photography/videography, 250 g - 2 kg, public space	CAAN registration, UIN display, local administration approval for public-space flights, VLOS and 100 m AGL limits
Commercial/survey work, 2-25 kg (Category C)	Full CAAN registration with physical verification, insurance required, area/flight approval from CAAN, possible Remote Pilot Licence depending on operation profile
Any flight near an airport, at night, BVLOS, or above 100 m AGL	Specific CAAN authorization, possible ATC coordination, NOTAM issuance, and a Remote Pilot Licence with relevant qualifications
Foreign nationals, any category	Passport/visa, customs declaration, MOHA security clearance, CAAN registration and flight permission, often coordination with the Department of Tourism for trekking/conservation regions

12. Where to Verify and Apply

- **CAAN main site:** caanepal.gov.np
- **CAAN drone registration portal:** drone.caanepal.gov.np
- **Flight Safety Standards Department (FSSD):** flightsafety.caanepal.gov.np
- **CAAN contact:** +977-1-4262387 · Email: drone@caanepal.gov.np
- **Office address:** Flight Safety Standards Department, CAAN, Sinamangal, Kathmandu 44600

A note on reliability

This article is built directly from CAAN's published **Unmanned Aircraft System Requirements (UASR)**, its registration appendices, and CAAN/FSSD application documents — the primary legal source for drone operations in Nepal — supplemented by publicly available CAAN administrative documents on registration fees and foreign-applicant procedures. Because CAAN periodically updates fees, forms, and specific procedural details, and because MOHA and local authorities apply their own working procedures on top of CAAN's requirements, operators should treat this as a solid

foundation and confirm current specifics — especially fees, area-specific permits, and any amendments issued after April 2021 — directly with CAAN before conducting operations.