



Unauthorized drone flights prohibited in Laboratory restricted airspace, including additional “No Drone Zone”

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Program at Los Alamos the model for other nuclear sites

Los Alamos, New Mexico, June 13, 2018—Los Alamos National Laboratory, in collaboration with the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), has deployed a system to counter all unauthorized unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) over its restricted airspace and an additional FAA designated “No Drone Zone.”

The system is Government authorized and is currently in an operational testing phase.

“All airspace over the Laboratory is protected right now against unauthorized drone or UAS flights,” said Michael Lansing, head of the Laboratory’s security operations. “We can detect and track a UAS and if it poses a threat we have the ability to disrupt control of the system, seize or exercise control, confiscate, or use reasonable force to disable, damage or destroy the UAS.”

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Los Alamos National Laboratory is a “No Drone Zone”

With legal authority granted by Congress through the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the NNSA has the enhanced ability to protect its facilities from any UAS that may pose a threat to the safety or security of assets and personnel.

The Counter-UAS program at Los Alamos will be the blueprint for future programs at three other NNSA sites. Systems are planned for the Pantex Plant in Texas, the Y-12 facility in Tennessee, and the National Nuclear Security Site in Nevada.

In cooperation with the FAA, NNSA has defined a threat as “the reasonable likelihood that an unmanned aircraft system or unmanned aircraft activity, if unabated, could inflict or otherwise cause physical harm to a person; inflict or otherwise cause damage to property or systems; interfere with the operational mission of a covered facility or asset; conduct unauthorized surveillance or reconnaissance; or result in unauthorized access to, or disclosure of, classified or otherwise lawfully protected information.”

Under separate authority, the FAA has established “no drone zones” for sites with Category I Special Nuclear Materials. NNSA has also developed signage to advise UAS operators about specific airspace boundaries where they may not fly their aircraft and that violating the airspace will have severe consequences.

“Implementation guidance by NNSA focuses on high-level actions to be taken to detect, identify, track and mitigate drones that pose a threat to NNSA covered facilities,” said Lewis Monroe III, Director of NNSA’s Office of Security Operations and Programmatic Planning.

NNSA sites will coordinate with federal, state and local law enforcement, other government agencies, air fields, hospitals and emergency operations centers to establish appropriate agreements about warning and contacting local flight operators and protocols for recovery efforts related to unauthorized UASs forced to land outside of NNSA sites.

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