



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Council Members Hunter and Hines  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** A Resolution supporting responsible drone ownership through safe operation, and directing the City Manager to develop an education strategy to help connect residents to information on drone regulation and policies in Tacoma. – Requested for September 29, 2020  
**DATE:** August 17, 2020

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

A Resolution supporting responsible drone ownership through safe operation, and directing the City Manager to develop an education strategy to help connect residents to information on drone regulation and policies in Tacoma.

**COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Council Members Hunter and Hines

**BACKGROUND:**

Drones, or more formally Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), or when they are under 55lbs, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), has many regulations that ensure safe operation and ownership. Regulation of UAVs falls under the authority of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which regulates U.S. airspace and prohibits states and localities from regulating drone in most cases. In Tacoma, the City Council has already passed amended Ordinance 28615 to update the park code that added drones, “sky lanterns,” unmanned aircraft systems and motorized models as prohibited equipment use in parks except as specifically authorized by permit or the Metro Parks Director. Methods of getting authorization to fly in parks, and general understanding of FAA rules is lacking, and would benefit from a resource to help educate and inform residents.

The FAA recently has adopted rules that require registration of drones, restrict their size, and limit how high and fast they can fly, and makes it easier to become a commercial drone operator. The following are the basic regulations all drone owners should be aware of that the City can help to educate residents about.

1. Register your drone, mark it on the outside with the registration number and carry proof of registration with you.
2. Fly only for recreational purposes.
3. Fly your drone at or below 400 feet above the ground when in uncontrolled (Class G) airspace.
4. Obtain authorization before flying in controlled airspace (Class B, C, D, and E).
5. Keep your drone within your visual line of sight, or within the visual line-of-sight of a visual observer who is co-located (physically next to) and in direct communication with you.
6. Do not fly at night unless your drone has lighting that allows you to know its location and orientation at all times.
7. Give way to and do not interfere with manned aircraft.
8. Never fly over any person or moving vehicle.
9. Never interfere with emergency response activities such as disaster relief, any type of accident response, law enforcement activities, firefighting, or hurricane recovery efforts.



- 10. Never fly under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Many over-the-counter medications have side effects that could impact your ability to safely operate your drone.
- 11. Do not operate your drone in a careless or reckless manner.

By developing an educational campaign, a website or similar resource can be set up to provide people information and links from the FAA website locally, and help businesses who sell drones know of these regulations so they can inform customers.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

All residents will potentially be affected by this policy but the real target are those who regularly use drones for photos or business purposes, or recreationally such as families or younger residents flying for fun. The outreach on this education comes from hearing from residents who have witnessed unsafe usage of drones, and from our residents who have drones, but were surprised to learn about the many regulations of drone usage, even recreationally.

**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

This legislation positively impacts equality by ensuring all users are properly registered and are aware of safe drone operation regulations.

**Livability:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

**Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

Helping residents who own drones operate them safely will help all residents feel more secure knowing that drone pilots are registered, and are following safe operation regulations in Tacoma. This will create opportunities for recreation and enjoyment, while ensuring residents who do not use drones continue to have a positive perception of public safety and quality of life.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Do not adopt resolution	None	There is no local policy guiding responsible drone ownership or education on how to comply with FAA rules

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

This information to residents will be passive in nature, and will rely on resident complaints to know whether there are issues with drone owners in Tacoma. In the future there could be further actions to help educate residents.

**SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

By passing this resolution the City provides an avenue of education of residents without creating new regulations or laws. We recommend adopting this as a first step in supporting safe drone ownership in Tacoma.



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct fiscal impact to implement this resolution. The impact to resources will be staff time to create an educational webpage.

**What Funding is being used to support the expense?**

N/A

**Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?**

N/A

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

N/A

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

N/A

**Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?**

N/A