

Drones a significant threat to European airspace, says ERA

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The increasing use of RPAS/drones (remotely piloted aircraft systems) is threatening the safety of European airspace and needs better regulation and control. Simon McNamara, director general of the European Regions Airline Association (ERA), explains: “Recent near misses between RPAS and commercial aircraft illustrate why swift action must be taken to protect Europe’s passengers, crews and residents through better regulation of European airspace with regards to RPAS. Recent examples of incidents include two near misses in July – one between an RPAS and a commercial aircraft on its approach to Warsaw International Airport and another between an RPAS and an Airbus A320 on its final approach to Heathrow Airport.

“Worryingly, only some EU member states have regulations for the flying of smaller RPAS in place. With a dramatic increase in the use and commercialisation of RPAS, European aviation needs to act now to harmonise standards and rules across the region.”

RPAS weighing less than 150kg are regulated by some states, and those above by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). However, the rapid increase in the RPAS market for recreational purposes, particularly smaller RPAS, is a significant hazard to commercial aircraft.

“Europe needs urgent measures to safeguard its airspace and incorporate RPAS operations into commercial airspace,” says McNamara. “ERA welcomes the work being done by EASA and others to integrate RPAS into Europe’s aviation system in a safe and risk-free manner which will allow this innovative technology to grow in a safe way. However, action needs to be taken now with regulators and industry groups joining forces to tackle this issue together,” he adds.

ENDS

*Founded in 1980, ERA is a non-profit trade association representing some 175 companies involved in European air transport. The association promotes the interests of European airlines by lobbying the European Commission and other European regulatory bodies on policy matters, promoting the social and economic importance of air transport and its environmental commitments.

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