



Operational guidance for drone users: flying a drone near a railway track

Imagine this scenario: you are flying your own Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) or drone near a railway track, without talking to Network Rail's Air Operations team. The sighting report will instigate a Police attendance.

Those working on the track could be distracted by the flight above them. They are not directly involved with the flight ('uninvolved people') but your aircraft needs to be a safe distance away from them and any passenger trains that are operating.

Your aircraft could delay or disrupt:

- urgent track inspections that are being carried out by authorised flights along the same track; or
- a search for a missing or vulnerable person by the British Transport Police.

The above could be seen to endanger people and property and so would be a breach of Article 241 of the Air Navigation Order 2016 which could lead to prosecution.

Be aware that drones cannot ...

- Be flown within 50 metres of Network Rail track without prior permission from Network Rail's Air Operations team (as referenced in Standard NR/L3/OPS/251 on the Network Rail Standards Portal).
- Weigh more than 7kg in Maximum Take Off Mass (MTOM) over/near to live tracks unless Network Rail's Air Operations team is consulted 21 days prior to flight.
- Be flown more than 500 metres or Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) whichever is less of the Drone Operator without specific safety cases in place.
- Be flown closer than 20 metres in height to the track due to vortices, high electrification and Radio Frequency (RF) output.
- Be flown down the centre line of the track unless cleared prior through Network Rail's Air Operations team.
- Be flown in high winds or very wet conditions.
- Be flown near to track without Insurance and a Risk Assessment cleared by Network Rail's Air Operations team that includes risk mitigation for track worker distraction.

If in doubt, do the right thing and contact Network Rail's Air Operations team by email droneenquiries@networkrail.co.uk .