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FAA Expands Drone No-Fly Zones

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The FAA has issued a notice announcing that it is expanding the list of areas special permission is required to fly unmanned aerial vehicles (or drones) to cover seven sites operated by the federal Department of Energy, including the Hanford Site in Washington, the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. The restrictions will go into effect on December 29, 2017.

The FAA already has restricted drone flights over many sites in the US, including major airports, military bases, landmarks and large dams, as well as within 15 miles of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The FAA has made an interactive map of current and pending restricted areas, which is available online, The FAA also has created an app that drone operators can use to determine if there are restrictions in the areas where they wish to fly.

The map and app are designed to provide information on FAA-imposed restrictions only, but do not necessarily include all FAA restrictions. They also omit restrictions imposed by other entities. Notably, the map does not include National Parks, which generally do not permit operation of drones without prior permission. In addition, the map and the app are not updated in real time and so may not reflect all current restrictions. There also are additional restrictions based on local activities, such as professional sporting events, and the FAA imposes temporary restrictions for major events. Information on all of the restrictions on drone flights is available on the FAA's unmanned aerial vehicles site.

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