



Model Aeronautics Association of Canada

SAFETY CODE 2025



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Introduction

The MAAC Safety Code applies to all members, operating any category of model (RPAS (model aircraft and “drones”), Tethered aircraft, Free Flight aircraft, Model Rocketry and Surface Vehicles) at approved locations regardless of persons present, and for recreational or approved educational purposes only.

Each category of modelling has its own safety code pages that is category specific. Where more than one category of model is operated at a site members shall ensure all relevant rules are complied with. Details on how to implement and comply with Safety Code provisions can be found in MAAC’s Administrative and Operational Policy manuals at www.maac.ca

The Safety Code is crafted to minimize the risk from our modelling activities to the public, MAAC and our members. The Safety Code is written in the following hierarchy:

- Aviation and public safety
- Member on member safety
- Regulatory compliance, and
- Insurance related risk.

Additional rules, procedures and policies established by MAAC must be consulted and followed to assure regulatory compliance and receive insurance coverage.



General

The MAAC Safety Code applies to all members, operating any category of model (RPAS (model aircraft and “drones”), Tethered aircraft, Free Flight aircraft, Model Rocketry and Surface Vehicles) at approved locations regardless of persons present, and for recreational or approved educational purposes only.

All members shall:

1. review and comply with the current version of the MAAC Safety Code and all site or event specific rules and policies.
2. comply with all applicable by-laws, laws, regulations, including Canadian Aviation Regulations (CAR), and any directions or instructions issued by a Law Enforcement officer, regulatory body or their authorized agents.

No member shall:

3. operate or facilitate autonomous model operation.
4. operate more than one model of any category at a time.
5. operate any radio-control, telemetry or video system, other than a spread spectrum system, within 5 kilometers of any other known MAAC location without a frequency control method/procedure.
6. handle fuels, batteries, propulsive items, and related equipment except in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations and where none exist in a manner that provides reasonable safeguards.
7. fuel, arm, start, “tune” or make ready for operation a model unless they do so in a manner that reasonably assures the safety of persons and property. Where appropriate, model restraints shall be used.
8. leave any model unattended or unsupervised, if the propulsion system is running, armed, or otherwise capable of operation/starting, if doing so could reasonably affect the safety of any person.
9. enter or permit another person to enter, an active modeling area without the permission of all active modelers, unless it is safe to do so.

No member shall operate, or continue to operate any category of model:

10. at a location deemed unsafe by MAAC, or unless otherwise authorized, at a site without a valid MAAC Site Operating Certificate (SOC).
11. in such a reckless, negligent, or otherwise unsafe manner likely to endanger aviation safety, or the safety and security of any persons or property.
12. At less than the MAAC stipulated minimum buffer zone distance as stipulated in the category specific safety code,
13. if suffering or is likely to suffer from fatigue or while under the influence of alcohol/cannabis or other judgment impairing drugs.
14. of a size, weight, propulsion system or performance capability that is unsafe/inappropriate for that location.
15. unless prior to the first operation of the day and after any mishap that requires repairs, they have conducted an inspection to ensure serviceability and correct operation of all components and systems.
16. unless there is a means to render the propulsion system inoperative, unarmed or otherwise make the model “unpowered” prior to and after operation.
17. carrying a payload which contains explosive/incendiary devices, launch any projectile from or in the direction of any model, or for the purpose of providing a target for projectiles.
18. that transports or carries onboard a living creature.
19. where flames, heat or exhaust from combustion or other sources on the model could reasonably ignite nearby combustible materials, unless suitable fire mitigation strategies exist.
20. into, between or above clouds.
21. beyond the unaided (except for corrective lenses and sunglasses) visual line of sight (VLOS) of themselves, their visual observer or spotter.
22. in reduced visibility conditions such as fog, smoke, rain/snow or similar, or behind trees, hills or other obstructions if obstruction detection and safety assurance (separation from aircraft, bystanders, property etc.) is negatively affected.
23. in darkness (reduced lighting) unless the model is equipped with a functioning lighting system that shows the model’s orientation, and the model operator ensures the modelling area has an equivalent level of safety as when illuminated.
24. at a site where other categories of modelling or public activities occur, unless they assure safe integration with those activities.
25. not listed in this safety code or other MAAC policy, unless otherwise approved in writing.

RPAS

These safety rules apply to all members operating RPAS regardless of operating location or number of persons present. The safe operation of any modelling category can be influenced by many factors such as local field conditions, weather, size of gathering, mix of model categories etc. Site operators, event organizers or other assigned responsible persons may implement additional requirements as they deem necessary to ensure full-scale aviation, public and member safety. MAAC rules allow both recreational “model aircraft” and “drones” at MAAC sites. The relevant definitions are:

RPAS - Drone – means a navigable RPAS, regardless of propulsive or aerodynamic configuration, which contains any on-board system or element capable of navigating the RPAS independent of remote user command or control input.

RPAS - Model Aircraft – means a navigable RPAS, regardless of propulsive or aerodynamic configuration, which does not contain any onboard system or element capable of navigating the RPAS and requires remote user command or control input. Basic flight stabilization, flight gyros or similar are not considered as navigating the model – any type of “return to home” does as it navigates the model.

While the term “drone” is normally associated with multi-rotors, MAAC drones can in fact be fixed wing or helicopter configurations. Equally, model aircraft also include multi-rotor models without a “onboard brain”. Unless otherwise specified, RPA or RPAS encompasses both drones and model aircraft.

No member shall:

1. create a hazard by carrying in or dropping from an RPA any object that may endanger persons or property.
2. facilitate operation of an RPA by any non-MAAC person, unless doing so for the purposes of an introductory demonstration and the operation is done utilizing a control system which provides the MAAC member immediate control ability (i.e., buddy-box).
3. Operate any RPA (model aircraft or “drone”) in controlled or restricted airspace except in accordance with a manufacturer safety assurance declaration, MAAC or otherwise. **For clarity**, MAAC does **not** allow drones to operate under the MAAC Manufacturer declaration.

No member shall operate an RPAS:

4. except in compliance with the CAR, MAAC SFOC, and any rules approved by MAAC.
5. unless the Site or Event Organizers or members establish a flight/safety line and take reasonable steps to ensure all buffer zones distances are respected
6. if the RPA which weighs more than 35 kilograms (77.2 pounds) – including fuel and payload.
7. unsupervised unless they can operate the system in a safe manner.
8. at any location/event to which the public has been invited or is present unless the RPAS has successfully completed a prior test flight (or series of test flights if required), to prove it airworthy. This applies equally to maiden flights or after substantial repairs were required.
9. if the RPA **weighs more than 250 grams**, from or near any location readily and commonly accessible to bystanders (i.e., parks, school fields, public spaces, clubs/sites immediately adjacent to those with no gate/fence, or Gymnasiums, Golf Domes, etc.), unless they have a spotter or system to alert the operator(s) of bystanders who come **within** the bystander buffer zone distance from the **entire expected flying area**.

RPAS

RPA Operation - Minimum Buffer Zone Lateral Distances Regardless of Altitude					
WEIGHT	From By- Standers	From Spectators	From Insurable items of value	From Unprotected MAAC members	From any Pilot Station area (Flight Line distance)
> 1 Kg – 35Kg	30m	30m	30m	10m	7m
> 250gm - 1Kg	30m	10m	10m	3m	1m
> 150gm – 250gm	10m	5m	1m	NFDO	
< 150gm	5m	1m	NFDO		

NFDO – means **No** (intentional) **Flight Directly Over**.

Notes:

1. **Powered ground movement of RPA** shall also respect the buffer zone distances.
2. Clubs/Event Organizers may increase any of these distances, provided it is clearly communicated to all RPA operators
3. “Unprotected” means **not** behind an appropriate barrier or **not** wearing personal protection equipment such as head protection or similar, intended to guard against personal injury from RPA operations.
4. For indoor operations, the main structure of the facility is not considered part of any distance requirement
5. Sites that are 250grm+ **helicopter or multi rotor only**, may reduce the flight line distance to pilot stations to half the above distance, but not less than 1m.
6. **Sites with mixed operations shall adopt the maximum distances for all RPAS, when those “heavier” models are in operation**

Free Flight Aircraft

These safety rules apply to all members operating Free Flight aircraft (FFA) regardless of operating location or number of persons present. The safe operation of any modelling category can be influenced by many factors such as local field conditions, weather, size of gathering, mix of model categories etc. Site Operators, Event Organizers or other assigned responsible persons may implement additional requirements as they deem necessary to ensure full-scale aviation, public and member safety.

No member shall operate a free flight aircraft:

1. weighing more than 3.1 kilograms (7 lbs) – excluding fuel or propellant(s) but including batteries and any payload.
2. in winds exceeding 9m/sec (32km/hr, or 20mph)
3. with any type of remote control where the flight path is controllable by the operator in real time, except for throttle control, control of dethermalizers, and a single axis control surface activation in a single direction. **Capability** for multiple axis control, or a single axis with proportional control, or reversible control whether utilized or not meets the definition of RPA and must follow the RPAS rules.
4. unless the Site or Event Organizers or members establish a safety line and take reasonable steps to ensure all buffer zones distances are respected.
5. or launch any weight of FFA at any location, or to an altitude, or in a manner that is or is likely to be hazardous to full-scale aircraft. The member shall take reasonable precautions to ensure operations do not pose a hazard to full-scale aircraft, gliders, and balloons always.
6. powered by an internal combustion engine larger than 11cc (.67ci), electric power system exceeding 1500 watts, impulse thrust exceeding 160Ns, or any combination of propulsion systems exceeding those power outputs. FFA powered by a gas turbine or pulse jet propulsion system are prohibited.
7. powered by an electric propulsion system, unless the propulsion system has a means to render the propeller/rotor “safe” during a crash or unintended contact with any person. This may be accomplished electronically (remote throttle control, ESC over amp, inertia kill switch etc.) or mechanically (easily broken propeller/rotor, stripped gears, shear pins on shaft, crash force battery ejection/disconnect etc.)
8. weighing more than **250 grams** at any location/event to which the public has been invited or is present unless the FFA has successfully completed a prior test flight (or series of test flights if required), to prove it airworthy. This applies to equally maiden flights or after substantial repairs were required.
9. within 3nm of an aerodrome identified in the Canada Flight Supplement (CFS) or Canadian Water Aerodrome Supplement (CWAS), or any other type of location used for full scale aviation, unless they have met the following requirements:
 - i. if weighing more than 1kg, the model is equipped with remote capability to terminate the flight on command, such as activating the de-thermalizer or other control function, and
 - ii. the operator(s) have established procedures to ensure prior to launching and during the entire flight, FFA do not conflict with or pose a hazard to full-scale aircraft in the vicinity
 - iii. regardless of such procedures or proximity of aerodrome(s), the member operating the FFA shall retain ultimate responsibility in all circumstances for collision avoidance from full-scale aircraft.

Free Flight Aircraft

FFA Operation - Minimum Buffer Zone Distances					
WEIGHT	From By-Standers	From Spectators	From Insurable items of value	From Unprotected MAAC members	From any Pilot Station area
>1 Kg – 3.1Kg	30m	30m	30m	10m	7m
>250gm - 1Kg	30m	10m	10m	3m	1m
> 150gm – 250gm	10m	5m	1m	NFDO	
< 150gm	5m	1m	NFDO		
NFDO – means No (intentional) Flight Directly					
Over. Notes:					
1. Additional distances must be included for hand-launching or ROW/ROG to prevent violating the above minimums.					
2. Clubs/Event Organizers may increase any of these distances, provided it is clearly communicated to all FFA operators					
3. For indoor operations, the main structure of the facility is not considered part of any distance requirement					
4. For Free flight aircraft 1kg or more, launch distances shall be at least 40 meters downwind of any spectator areas, with the intent being free flight no closer than 30 meters – considerate of wind conditions					

Tethered Aircraft

These rules apply to all types of Tethered Aircraft (TA) operations where one member is operating a TA or control line (C/L) aircraft in a single TA flight area. The safe operation of any modelling category can be influenced by many factors such as local field conditions, weather, size of gathering, mix of model categories etc. Site Operators, Event Organizers or other assigned responsible persons may implement additional requirements as they deem necessary to ensure full-scale aviation, public and member safety. Members who want to operate multiple TA or C/L aircraft in the same flight area such as combat, or racing must read and follow any published MAAC Safety related rules contained in the relevant Competition or category documents.

No member shall operate a TA:

1. within 15m (50') of above ground power lines.
2. weighing more than 5 kilograms (11lbs).
3. with an internal combustion engine with a combined piston displacement of greater than 15cc, electric power system exceeding 1500 watts, or any other propulsion system or combination of propulsion systems exceeding those power output limits.
4. unless the Site or Event Organizers or members establish a safety line and take reasonable steps to ensure all buffer zones distances are respected
5. on a line or lines exceeding 21.5 meters (70') in length measured from the centre of the control handle to the centre of the model or thrust line.
6. unless the entire tether system, including all sub-components (lines, handles, line terminations, clevises, bell cranks etc.), follow hobby accepted usage practices and where provided the manufacturers recommended practices for each component. Line splices and swivels are not allowed between line termination points.
7. unless, prior to the first flight, or after any repair, alteration or disassembly of any component of the tether or control line system, the complete line or lines and tether system components have been pull-tested to verify strength to withstand a minimum of a 10 G load factor.
8. an electric powered propeller driven TA unless the propulsion system has a means to render the propeller "safe" during a crash or unintended contact with any person. This may be accomplished electronically (remote throttle control, ESC over amp, inertia kill switch etc.) or mechanically (easily broken propeller/rotor, stripped gears, shear pins on shaft, crash force battery ejection/disconnect etc.)
9. weighing more than 300 grams:
 - at any event to which the public has been invited and is present unless the TA has successfully completed a prior test flight (or series of test flights if required), to prove it and the tether system airworthy. This applies to maiden flights and/or after substantial repairs were required.
 - from or near any location readily and commonly accessible to bystanders unless they have physical barrier(s) or high visibility markings warning by-standers of the operation, or they have a spotter or system to alert the operator(s) of bystanders.
 - unless using a safety tether between the control-handle and their wrist, except when providing instruction.

Tethered Aircraft

TA Operation - Minimum Buffer Zone Distances					
WEIGHT	From By-Standers	From Spectators	From Insurable items of value	From Unprotected MAAC members	From any Pit Area
> 1 Kg – 5Kg	15m*	5m*	5m*	2m	1m
> 300gm - 1Kg	10m*	3m*	3m*	2m	1m
> 150gm – 300gm	5m	2m	1m	NFDO	
< 150gm	2m	1m	NFDO		

NFDO – means **No** (intentional) **Flight Directly Over**.

Distances marked with an asterisk may be reduced in half of that specified, **but in no instance less than 2m, provided** there is either a physical barrier, or clear markings, or other means in place (spotters etc.) to prevent any persons from inadvertently coming within the prescribed distances from an active model operating area.

Notes:

- Pit crew or assistants may be inside the minimum pit area distance temporarily without** violating the above minimums, **provided** they leave the areas as soon as possible, or wear appropriate protection (helmets etc.).
- Clubs/Event Organizers may increase any of these distances, provided it is clearly communicated to all TA operators
- For indoor operations, the main structure of the facility is not considered part of any distance requirement

Model Rocketry

These safety rules apply to all members operating Model Rockets regardless of operating location or number of persons present. The safe operation of any modelling category can be influenced by many factors such as local field conditions, weather, size of gathering, mix of model categories etc. Site Operators, Event Organizers or other assigned responsible persons may implement additional requirements as they deem necessary to ensure full-scale aviation, public and member safety.

No member shall operate a Model Rockets:

1. weighing more than 1500 grams (3.3 pounds – including motors and payload).
2. in winds exceeding 9m/sec (32km/hr, or 20mph) or
3. or arm, insert igniters, or otherwise make a MR ready for flight except immediately prior to launch and in a manner and location which assures other persons safety in the event of an accidental ignition
4. unless the Site or Event Organizers or members establish a safety line and take reasonable steps to ensure all buffer zones distances are respected
5. or launch a MR without clearly announcing a countdown of at least 5 seconds
6. or launch a MR in a direction more than 30 degrees from vertical
7. except using commercially available rocket motors or propulsion systems. Single use or reloadable motors are permitted.
8. with a single rocket motor, or any combination of multiple motors, or propulsion systems (such as compressed air/water) exceeding a total impulse of 160N.s.
9. unless it is equipped with an operable recovery system compatible with the model weight and performance expectations. **For clarity**, a rocket launched free flight aircraft or rocket launched/powered RPAS must comply with all relevant sections of each safety codes (rocket and free flight/RPAS).
10. if constructed with substantial metal airframe components. A substantial metal part is a nose cone, body tube, fins, any hard, sharp and external pointed part or any internal heavy metal part that can cause injuries to persons or damages to property.
11. unless using a remote electrical ignition system. All such systems shall utilize a firing switch that returns to the off position when released and a safety interlock device to prevent an accidental firing. In the event of a misfire, no person shall approach the model for a period sufficient to determine that no ignition will occur.
12. unless using a stable launch platform having a device to initially guide the model, and a blast deflector to deflect the exhaust away from the ground.
13. with any type of remote or automated control of the ascent or descent, however telemetry, FPV and other radio frequency use such as parachute deployment is permitted. **For clarity**, if any such devices make a rocket “navigable” then it is considered an RPAS and must follow RPAS rules and regulations.
14. launch or operate any weight of space model at any location, or to an altitude, or in a manner that is or is likely to be hazardous to full-scale aircraft. The member shall take reasonable precautions to ensure operations do not pose a hazard to full-scale aircraft, gliders, and balloons at all times.
15. weighing more than **150 grams** from any location/event where any non-consenting MAAC member or any other person is present unless the MR has successfully completed a prior test flight (or series of test flights if required), to prove it airworthy. This applies to equally to maiden flights or after substantial repairs were required.
16. weighing **more than 250 grams** from, or within 3nm of an aerodrome identified in the Canada Flight Supplement (CFS) or Canadian Water Aerodrome Supplement (CWAS), or any other type of location used for full scale aviation, unless they establish or follow established procedures to ensure MR do not conflict with or pose a hazard to full-scale aircraft in the vicinity. Regardless of such procedures or proximity of aerodrome(s), the member operating the MR shall retain ultimate responsibility, always and in all circumstances, for collision avoidance from full-scale aircraft.

Rocketry

MR operation – Launch point Minimum Buffer Zone Distances					
WEIGHT	From By-Standers	From Spectators	From Insurable items of value	From Unprotected MAAC members	From any Operator area
1 Kg – 1.5Kg	1/2 Max Altitude	30m	30m	10m	7m
> 250gm - 1Kg	1/2 Max Altitude	30m	10m	5m	
> 150gm – 250gm	1/4 Max Altitude	15m	15m	5m	
< 150gm	30m	10m	5m		
NFDO – means No (intentional) Flight Directly Over.					
Notes:					
1. Additional distances must be included for wind and launch angle to prevent violating the above minimums.					
2. Clubs/Event Organizers may increase any of these distances, provided it is clearly communicated to all MR operators					

Surface Models

These safety rules apply to **all** sub-categories of surface vehicle (cars, boats, tanks, models of industrial equipment etc) regardless of propulsion system (glow, gas, turbine, electric, sail, unpowered etc), operating location or number of persons present. The safe operation of any modelling category can be influenced by many factors such as local field conditions, weather, size of gathering, mix of model categories etc. Site Operators, Event Organizers or other assigned responsible persons may implement additional requirements as they deem necessary to ensure full-scale aviation, public and member safety.

No member shall operate a Surface Vehicle:

1. weighing more than 35kg (77lbs) including fuel/batteries and payload.
2. weighing more than 1 kilogram, or can operate at speeds in excess of 25kph (15mph):
 - from or near any location readily and commonly accessible to bystanders (i.e., parks, school fields, public spaces, indoors) unless there is a physical barrier to prevent bystanders from inadvertently entering the operations area, or they employ a spotter or system to alert the operator(s) of bystanders who may come within the bystander buffer zone distance for the entire expected operations area.
 - from any location/event where any non-consenting MAAC member or any other person is present unless the SV has successfully completed a prior test operation (or series of test operations if required), to prove it safe. This applies to equally to maiden operations or after substantial repairs were required.
 - on an aerodrome identified in the Canada Flight Supplement (CFS) or Canadian Water Aerodrome Supplement (CWAS), or any other type of location used for full scale aviation, unless they establish or follow established procedures to ensure SV do not conflict with or pose a hazard to full-scale aircraft in the vicinity. Regardless of such procedures or proximity of aerodrome(s), the member operating the SV shall retain ultimate responsibility, always and in all circumstances, for collision avoidance from full-scale aircraft.
3. unless immediate /restraint/cessation of model operation is possible by the operator or safety fencing of an appropriate size and strength is present around the entire operations area to prevent an errant SV from endangering bystanders, as required.
4. unless the Site or Event Organizers or members establish a safety line and take reasonable steps to ensure all buffer zones distances are respected.

Surface Operation - Minimum Buffer Zone Distances					
WEIGHT/SPEED	From By-Standers	From Spectators	From Insurable items of value	From Unprotected MAAC members	From any Operator Station area
1 Kg – 35Kg	30m*	5m*	5m*	2m	1m
>1 Kg & >25kph	30m*	5m*	5m*	2m	1m
< 1kg	10m*	3m*	1m*	No minimum	
<1kg & <25kph	5m*	1m*	No minimum		
Distances marked with an asterisk may be reduced in half of that specified, but in no instance less than 2m, provided there is either a physical barrier, or clear markings, or other means in place (spotters etc.) to prevent any persons from inadvertently coming within the prescribed distances from an active model operating area.					
Notes:					
1. Powered ground movement shall respect the buffer zone distances.					
2. Clubs/Event Organizers may increase any of these distances, provided it is clearly communicated to all SV operators					
3. For outdoor and indoor operations, the main structure of the facility or any fencing/barriers etc are not considered part of any distance requirement					

Robotics

“Robotics” are defined as a type of automated machine that can execute specific tasks with little or no human intervention and with speed and precision. The field of robotics deals with robot design, engineering and operation. While various regulations and MAAC policy does not allow autonomous operation of models of any category, MAAC does embrace members experimenting with semi-autonomous non-control sub-systems or portions of models.

Therefore, any category of model can be considered to involve “robotics”. The following rules and guidelines apply:

RPAS – Model Aircraft may contain various sub-systems with robotics or automation, provided they are not linked to the flight control system in any fashion, and do not contribute to navigation of the model. Any additions or robotic add-ons that affect the navigable portion of a model aircraft render the model aircraft a “drone” and the MAAC manufacturer declaration is invalid. Therefore, operation in advanced scenarios is prohibited.

RPAS – Drones by their definition have a degree of onboard automation of the flight controls, so the addition of robotics does not affect operation under MAAC. Drones that have an existing manufacturer declaration cannot be modified except in accordance with the manufacturer’s direction. Before operating any drone with new or additional “robotics” you **must** ensure you either meet the requirements of a manufacturer declaration or only operate the drone in non-advanced scenarios. MAAC can not modify or override another manufacturer’s declaration.

Tethered Aircraft - May contain any degree of robotics provided their presence does not render the model “navigable”. Navigable means control of the flight path, steered, maneuvered or “piloted” in any one of three dimensions, **outside the normal hobby accepted practices** associated with tethered/control line model aircraft. Meaning, substantial robotics are possible for “traditional control line aircraft” operating in a 70’ circle, however attaching a line to a “drone” and anchoring it to the ground/person does not absolve the CAR RPAS requirements and MAAC will not permit these types of operations.

Free Flight Aircraft - May contain a limited degree of robotics provided their presence does not render the model “navigable”. Navigable means control of the flight path, steered, maneuvered or “piloted” in any one of three dimensions, **outside the normal hobby accepted practices** associated with free flight aircraft. Meaning, members are free to add various sub-systems which may contain robotics or automation, provided they are not a flight control system in any fashion, and do not contribute to navigation of the model. One-time, irreversible activation of various control systems (dethermalizer, rudder, elevator, throttle etc.) is not considered control or navigable, even if controlled by the user on the ground.

Model Rocketry - May contain a limited degree of robotics provided their presence does not contribute to or control the model flight path after the launch cycle commences. On board gyros or other electronic flight stabilization systems are not permitted in MAAC. One-time, irreversible activation of various recovery systems (parachute, foldable wings.) is not considered control or navigable, even if controlled by the user on the ground, and are permitted.

Surface vehicles - May contain any degree of robotics provided the operator retains ultimate operational control of the model.

Revision History

The MAAC Safety Code is maintained by the Safety Advisory Group and approved the MAAC Board of Directions.

	Description	Approved
Version 1	2025 MAAC Safety Code	April 7, 2025