U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

Advisory Circular

Subject: **Model Aircraft Operating Standards** | **Date:** **September 2, 2015** | **AC No. 91-57A**
Initiated by: AJV-115

1. PURPOSE. This advisory circular (AC) provides guidance to persons operating Unmanned Aircraft (UA) for hobby or recreation purposes meeting the statutory definition of "model aircraft" contained in Section 336 of Public Law 112-95, the *FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012*. This AC describes means by which model aircraft may be operated safely in the National Airspace System (NAS). Nothing in this AC changes the requirement to comply with the statute or any applicable regulations.

2. APPLICABILITY. This AC provides information for any person who engages in model aircraft operations using model aircraft as defined by statute. (See paragraph 6.)

3. REFERENCES. Title 49 U.S.C. § 40101; P.L. 112-95 (126 Stat. 77 *et seq.*).

4. RELATED MATERIAL (current editions).

- Subtitle VII of Title 49, United States Code (49 USC)
- Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR)
- Subtitle B of Public Law 112-95 (Feb. 14, 2012)
- *Aeronautical Information Manual* (AIM)
- Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) listing: http://tfr.faa.gov/tfr2/list.html
- Aeronautical Navigation Products (Charts): http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/
- Notices to Airman: https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/notices/

5. CANCELLATION. AC 91-57, *Model Aircraft Operating Standards*, dated June 9, 1981, is cancelled.

6. MODEL AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS.

a. Terminology.

(1) 49 USC § 40102 defines an aircraft as "any contrivance invented, used, or designed to navigate, or fly in, the air." 14 CFR § 1.1 defines an aircraft as "a device that is used or intended to be used for flight in the air."

(2) Public Law 112-95 defines unmanned aircraft as an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft.
(3) Section 336 of P.L. 112-95 defines a model aircraft as an unmanned aircraft that is capable of sustained flight in the atmosphere, flown within visual line of sight of the person operating the aircraft, and flown only for hobby or recreational purposes.

b. Model Aircraft Hazards in the NAS. While aero-modelers generally are concerned about safety and exercise good judgment when flying model aircraft for the hobby and recreational purposes for which they are intended, they may share the airspace in which manned aircraft are operating. Unmanned aircraft, including model aircraft, may pose a hazard to manned aircraft in flight and to persons and property on the surface if not operated safely. Model aircraft operations that endanger the safety of the National Airspace System, particularly careless or reckless operations or those that interfere with or fail to give way to any manned aircraft may be subject to FAA enforcement action.

c. Determination of "Model Aircraft" Status. Whether a given unmanned aircraft operation may be considered a "model aircraft operation" is determined with reference to section 336 of Public Law 112-95:

(1) The aircraft is flown strictly for hobby or recreational use;

(2) The aircraft operates in accordance with a community-based set of safety guidelines and within the programming of a nationwide community-based organization (CBO);

(3) The aircraft is limited to not more than 55 pounds, unless otherwise certified through a design, construction, inspection, flight test, and operational safety program administered by a CBO;

(4) The aircraft operates in a manner that does not interfere with, and gives way to, any manned aircraft; and

(5) When flown within 5 miles of an airport, the operator of the model aircraft provides the airport operator or the airport air traffic control tower (when an air traffic facility is located at the airport) with prior notice of the operation. Model aircraft operators flying from a permanent location within 5 miles of an airport should establish a mutually agreed upon operating procedure with the airport operator and the airport air traffic control tower (when an air traffic facility is located at the airport).

d. Public Law 112-95 recognizes the authority of the Administrator to pursue enforcement action against persons operating model aircraft who endanger the safety of the National Airspace System. Accordingly, model aircraft operators must comply with any Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR). TFRs are issued over specific locations due to disasters, or for reasons of national security; or when determined necessary for the management of air traffic

in the vicinity of aerial demonstrations or major sporting events. Do not operate model aircraft in designated areas until the TFR is no longer in force.

Model aircraft must not operate in Prohibited Areas, Special Flight Rule Areas or, the Washington National Capital Region Flight Restricted Zone, without specific authorization. Such areas are depicted on charts available at http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/. Additionally, model aircraft operators should be aware of other Notices to Airmen (NOTAMS) which address operations near locations such as military or other federal facilities, certain stadiums, power plants, electric substations, dams, oil refineries, national parks, emergency, services and other industrial complexes. In addition to the previously mentioned link, information regarding published NOTAMS can be found at: https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic /publications/notices/.

The requirement to not fly within TFRs, or other circumstances where prohibited, would apply to operation of model aircraft that would otherwise comply with section 336 of Public Law 112-95.

e. Model aircraft operators should follow best practices including limiting operations to 400 feet above ground level (AGL).

f. All other operators and for additional information on Unmanned Aircraft Systems please visit: http://www.faa.gov/uas/ .

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