



WHAT DO I NEED TO FLY HERE?—PART 2

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IN THE FIRST installment of this series last month, we discussed one of the most common combinations of land use and airspace: using private land in uncontrolled (Class G) airspace while operating at or below 400 feet above ground level (AGL). While that scenario covers the bulk of recreational operations across the country, many still need to know how to proceed within controlled airspace or with more complex land arrangements.

This entry builds on the same framework where we'll assume baseline pilot qualifications, then consider permissions and compliance for situations where land arrangements, altitude, or airspace control introduce additional requirements. If readers are not familiar with the core recreational rules, FAA registration, Remote ID concepts, and the difference between controlled and uncontrolled airspace, you can find descriptions and explanations of these concepts within the Government Affairs blog, the link to which can be found in "Sources."

As with last time, once your baseline requirements are met, operating within a given space hinges on the following questions: Who controls the land and who controls the airspace—and at what altitude?

Example 1: Public Land, Uncontrolled Airspace, Flying Above 400 Feet AGL

Class G airspace is categorized as uncontrolled, but that does not mean *unrestricted*. For recreational fliers, the default altitude limit in Class G remains at 400 feet AGL in most areas, unless the site or the pilot is operating under a specific authorization or waiver.

In this scenario, let's assume that our pilot wants to fly in Class G airspace in a public park that has an established club with FAA authorizations for flexibility, and that the pilot would like to fly their model above the standard 400-foot mark.

Permissions To Consider

- **Landowner permission:** Many parks allow public flying but often there is a requirement to obtain a permit or provide proof of insurance. Make sure you comply with local park rules before proceeding.
- **Club permission:** Since our pilot wants to operate above 400 AGL, the simplest way would be to operate as a guest of the club—we will assume the pilot has been invited to do so.

Compliance Requirements to Consider


- In this case, the AMA club has received a FAA authorization to fly above 400 AGL to the 700 AGL mark in most circumstances. Since our pilot is a guest of the club, that altitude flexibility extends to the pilot as well.
- **Note:** The same rules would apply if the authorization was set at 1200 AGL instead of 700.
- If the pilot simply operates as a guest of the park but not of the club, then the altitude limit would remain at 400. The site can be used by both the club and the pilot in this scenario, as it's a public space, but their operations are considered separate.
- All other standard requirements still apply, such as FAA registration, The Recreational UAS Safety Test (TRUST) certificates, safety rules, and Remote ID (unless the site is an established FAA-Recognized Identification Area (FRIA) or similar exemption).

It is important to note that Class G alone does not grant higher altitude authority.

While it makes it easier to obtain certain authorizations, the deciding factor for flying above the standard 400-foot AGL will always be the standing permissions issued to the operator or flying site from the FAA.

Had this scenario instead played out in controlled airspace, our pilot would need to consider more formal authorizations. Deciding when a Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAANC) needs to be requested for one-off flight, or whether a pre-existing authorization document applies to you, can largely depend on local relations and established flying sites. Because of space limitations, the next installment will focus exclusively on scenarios within controlled airspace to further clarify these terms and when they are necessary.

Determining airspace class and what is potentially allowed there is, of course, extremely important, but the local permissions and processes can easily have just as large an impact. However, no matter how well a pilot has researched the area and airspace, it is always necessary to check with local pilots when visiting a new field; many public and private fields will have site-specific rules that add extra restrictions for time of day, field access, etc.

I'll continue to explore and clarify complex airspace and land situations in the next issue. As always, please feel free to reach out to me with specific questions at lucasr@modelaircraft.org to discuss nuances. The compliance items listed here are not comprehensive in all scenarios and should be viewed as guidelines for troubleshooting. 

SOURCES:

AMA Government Affairs Blog
amablog.modelaircraft.org/amagov

Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAANC)
faa.gov/uas/getting_started/laanc

FAA UAS Facility Map
faa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html