



DRONE SIGHTING GUIDELINES FOR PILOTS AND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Drone sightings by commercial aircraft are on the rise. There have been numerous cases of airspace and aerodromes being closed due to reports of drones in the vicinity. The UK and many other countries do not yet have standard procedures to deal with drone sightings near aerodromes or violations of controlled airspace by drones. These guidelines, created by BALPA and The Guild of Air Traffic Control Officers (GATCO) are not a one-size-fits-all solution due to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of drone encounters, but can be used to support the implementation of standard procedures and help pilots and air traffic controllers handle drone reports as safely as possible.

Below is a quick guide to the new guidelines but [you can read further information on the BALPA blog](#).

DRONE SIGHTING GUIDELINES

Speed

Pilots: if a drone has been reported, consider requesting a speed reduction:

- ✈ Initially to minimum clean, including during departure
- ✈ On STAR, initial or intermediate approach, request a further reduction to 180kt
- ✈ On final approach observe ATC speed constraints to maintain separation

ATC: expect pilots to request a speed reduction

Inform

Pilots: if a drone is seen, inform ATC immediately and pass as much accurate information as possible about the drone sighting:

- ✈ Location
- ✈ Altitude
- ✈ Lateral and vertical separation
- ✈ Was it moving or stationary?
- ✈ Size, shape and appearance (e.g. quadcopter, camera underneath, colour, etc.)

ATC: inform supervisors, neighbouring sectors and pilots on and joining the frequency

Delay

Pilots: plan for possible delays or diversions

ATC: plan for possible delays and/or closure of airspace or aerodrome

Avoidance

Pilots: request alternative routings or radar vectors if deemed necessary.

ATC: consider the safety of the operation and avoid the area if deemed necessary.

Report

Pilots: file the appropriate safety report as established by your airline.

ATC: file the appropriate safety report as established by your ANSP.

In the event of imminent threat to the aircraft, none of the above prevents pilots declaring an emergency, taking avoiding action, etc

Helicopters are especially vulnerable to the damage that a collision could do. The speeds mentioned in this guidance refer to large aircraft, however, the principle of reducing speed to reduce impact energy still applies. Helicopter pilots should ensure that they use helmet visors if provided.