

Remote Pilots

This BL addresses the Federation's initial thoughts on the growing industrial and representational demands of pilots in one of the fastest emerging and technologically advanced forms of aviation: Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS). Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and their impact in all areas of aviation are potentially enormous.

A Remote Pilot is *a person charged by the operator with duties essential to the operation of a remotely piloted aircraft and who manipulates the flight controls, as appropriate, during flight time.*

The ICAO RPAS Manual (2015) opens with the following description of its scope:

RPAS are envisioned to be an equal partner in the civil aviation system, able to interact with air traffic control (ATC) and other aircraft on a real-time basis. The scope of ICAO provisions in the next 5 to 10 years is to facilitate integration of RPAS operating in accordance with instrument flight rules (IFR) in controlled airspace and at controlled aerodromes.

The consideration of potential membership or inclusion of Remote Pilots (RPs) in IFALPA is based on the fact that pilots are better off if they cooperate, rather than splitting into smaller groups. RPs are likely to become a key element of the piloting workforce of the future. Fragmentation should be avoided by appropriately expanding, rather than limiting, membership.

In July 2018, ICAO published an updated version of Annex 1 Personnel Licensing, which incorporated a dedicated remote pilot license (RPL) to support international flights operating under instrument flight rules. While this was a much-anticipated step forward in the development of a global framework for RPs, it will necessarily be some time before significant numbers of States implement the relevant Standards.

Some key definitions are:

- **Remote pilot.** A person charged by the operator with duties essential to the operation of a remotely piloted aircraft and who manipulates the flight controls, as appropriate, during flight time.
- **Remote pilot-in-command.** The remote pilot designated by the operator as being in command and charged with the safe conduct of a flight.

- **Remote co-pilot.** A licensed remote pilot serving in any piloting capacity other than as remote pilot-in-command but excluding a remote pilot who is in the remote pilot station for the sole purpose of receiving flight instruction.
- **Remote flight crew member.** A licensed flight crew member charged with duties essential to the operation of a remotely piloted aircraft system during a flight duty period.
- **Remote pilot station (RPS).** The component of the remotely piloted aircraft system containing the equipment used to pilot the remotely piloted aircraft.

“Traditional” pilots and RPs share many issues. Fatigue management is an essential issue for RPs, so policies and procedures for flight and duty time, operation shift schedules, and crew rest periods should be based on scientific principles for shifts and crew scheduling schemes.

Professional, commercial, and other related RPs (as defined by ICAO), should abide by the same standards of airmanship and professionalism as manned aviation pilots. IFALPA should continue to have a defining and leading role in curating the best practices internationally for dissemination among, and education for, all MAs and their members.

A potential way to foster engagement between “traditional pilots of manned aircraft” and professional RPs, could be to offer them membership in Member Associations. By bringing RPs into an MA, it is more likely that a cohesive aviation-centric piloting profession will expand in scope which serves to:

- Maximize the interests of MA members;
- Add another potentially powerful stakeholder to the process of coordinating significant actions (e.g. regulatory, administrative);
- Prevent other stakeholders (e.g. manufacturers, airlines) from pitting air line pilots against RPs and RPAS-operators;
- Give MAs a genuine insight into RPAS developments;
- Ensure that if RPs are Members it gives MAs technical and safety arguments on RPAS additional credibility;
- Assist and encourage RPs/RPAS-operators to attain and maintain the highest technical and professional standards (advancing the mission of IFALPA).

It is only by organizing/representing RPs that we can influence their terms and conditions of employment. It would be reasonable to bring RP wages up towards traditional airline pilots’ wages as that sector develops.

IFALPA believes that all RPAS/UAS should be integrated into common airspace. However, this goal cannot be realized without consideration of existing users, which, in civil air transport, primarily includes the broad membership of IFALPA’s MAs.

While the working conditions and career pathways of RPs may be very different than that of traditional

manned aviation, the need to have working conditions preserve mental and physical wellbeing, allow RPs to fully serve in their role as pilot in command of an aircraft, and protect themselves and the public should an emergency arise, are no different than that of manned aircraft pilots. RP working conditions must be at the same level as those of traditional manned aircraft. Any attempt to reduce or degrade their working environment would ultimately erode safety within the entire aviation system.

IFALPA encourages MAs to admit RPs to their membership in a manner consistent with their own understanding of their jurisdictions' needs and outlook on the RPAS industry, allowing for the varying ways MAs structure themselves.

IFALPA's Safety and Technical positions on how to properly integrate RPAS operations into that of manned aircraft can also be found in 17POS08 Unmanned Aircraft Systems, and 18POS21 UAS Security.