

Mical Caterina



August 24, 2015

U.S. Dept of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
6020 28th Ave. So. Room 201
Minneapolis, Mn. 55450

Re: 2015GL150096

Response to Investigation initiated by Aviation Safety Inspector David Nelson

Dear Sirs/Ms,

First & foremost I want to acknowledge and understand the concerns that the FAA and Mr Nelson have in lieu of all the recent incidents concerning UAS' and commercial aircraft. I wanted to respond quickly and completely to Mr Nelsons' concerns and will keep my response brief, but as complete as possible to mitigate any doubts of my recent flight in question.

About me:

I'm a professional audio engineer by trade since 1983. Photography has been and is a hobby of mine. In 2012 I purchased a DJI Phantom to explore aerial photography. Since then I've flown and operated multiple different manufactures versions and configurations for said hobby. I've also followed closely the rules & regulations set by the FAA regarding flying of UAS' and have never flown commercially.

Incident in Question:

I was contacted by Mr Kevin Foley (organizer of the event - see attachment A) on Weds Aug 12th regarding an aerial photo. He had gotten my name from one of my audio clients who knew I did aerial photography as a hobby. After Mr Foley asked if I would be willing to do this, I informed him I would need to check for distance to nearest airport(s), neighboring residential area and informed him that I'm just an amateur photographer. Mr Foley concurred and also informed me that his grassroots organization had no funds/ budget and this was just a single gathering for a photo shoot. I proceed to check with DJIs' site map of potential no fly zones in Minnesota (see attachment B) and noted that the St Paul airport is approx. 5.3 miles away and I was outside of their immediate NFZ.

I contacted Mr Foley and told him I would do the photo for him but it was possible that could change due to variable conditions of the day. I also informed Mr Foley that I could not fly and photograph directly over participants but I could still get photos using my lens(s) from an angle and that there were height restrictions and safety concerns. Mr Foley then mentioned that a representative of the FAA (Mr Nelson) had contacted him and sent him an email with information to give to the PIC, which Mr Foley forwarded to me. I read the email which was an explanation of model aircraft flights and regulations. I then attempted to contact Mr Nelson on Aug 14th at 4:04 pm in hopes of speaking with him, but he was out of his office. I was actually looking forward to meeting w/him or a representative of the FAA.

The day of the flight, I sat for roughly 2 hours watching the artist lay out his grid, then positioning the 100 or so participants in place before I was given the go ahead to launch. I performed all of my calibrations and pre flight checklist then proceeded to fly to the bottom (west end) of artists' grid where there were no participants and/or spectators took a handful of photos and a short video then landed. The flight lasted 1:16sec, my altitude ceiling was set at 250ft, but flight only reached 183.7ft (see attachment C - flight data recorder from my UAS) There were 2 other aircraft in the area, both helicopters - one was News 4s' helicopter, the other was an unidentified small white helicopter. Both were approx. 8-900 ft up and stayed on the outer perimeter of the park.

On the following Monday (17th) Mr Nelson returned my call and I informed him that I was the PIC and would fully cooperate with the FAA in any capacity and willingly provided my information (address, phone,etc..) Which led to these letters of investigation.

I hope this clarifies any questions or concerns the FAA may have as I followed all recommended procedures as per FAA regulations, it was not performed commercially or for monetary gain, I did NOT fly near or directly over participants other than myself, I stayed well below the 400ft ceiling as prescribed by FAA and my UAS was LOS at all times. The aircraft is a DJI Inspire, it weighs 6.4lbs when loaded w/battery and camera and it meets FAA regulations (FAA 333 exemptions) If you have any other questions feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mical Caterina

copy - FAA Flight Standards District Office, Mpls,MN

copy - FAA Safety Inspector David Nelson

copy - Peter Sachs - DPA (Drone Pilots Association)

