

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

This bill regulates unmanned aircraft systems, including: requiring \$25 annual registration and a permit to operate unmanned aircraft for commercial purposes; exempting unmanned aircraft used for private, noncommercial purposes from aircraft registration and the associated registration tax; specifying various misdemeanor penalties (enhanced to a gross misdemeanor on some second or subsequent violations); and authorizing rulemaking on regulating commercially operated unmanned aircraft. It also revises references to some federal law on transporting explosive materials.

Section

- 1 Unmanned aircraft systems.** Defines “unmanned aircraft system” for the chapter of statutes on aeronautics, to be an unmanned powered aircraft that does not carry a human operator.
- 2 Misdemeanor.** Revises references to federal law on regulating explosives, in a section that prohibits certain transportation of explosive materials by aircraft. Makes technical changes.
- 3 Unmanned aircraft system operations.** Creates a misdemeanor penalty for various acts relating to operating unmanned aircraft systems, including (1) operating the aircraft without the aircraft owner’s consent, (2) operating in willful or wanton disregard for safety, (3) carrying banned explosives, (4) launching or landing on property without the property owner’s consent, (5) operating within a mile of a helicopter operating for public safety purposes, and (6) interfering with manned aircraft.

Section

- 4** **Gross misdemeanor.** Creates a gross misdemeanor penalty for second or subsequent violations of any of the prohibitions on operating unmanned aircraft listed in section 3 of the bill.
- 5** **Careless or reckless operation.** Creates a misdemeanor penalty for operating unmanned aircraft in a careless or reckless manner.
- 6** **Unmanned aircraft system.** Requires \$25 annual registration of unmanned aircraft operated for commercial purposes or by a governmental entity, which is imposed instead of the price-based aircraft registration tax. Exempts unmanned aircraft operated for private, noncommercial purposes from registration and annual registration taxes.
- 7** **[360.591] Unmanned aircraft system; commercial use permit.** Establishes regulations governing permits for commercial use of unmanned aircraft.
- Subd. 1. Permit required.** Requires a commercial operator permit issued by Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) for operating unmanned aircraft for commercial purposes.
- Subd. 2. Permit requirements; eligibility.** Establishes eligibility requirements to obtain a commercial operator permit, which includes a minimum age of 17, possession of a driver's license, passing a knowledge test, and registering and payment of the \$25 fee (as required in section 6 of the bill).
- Subd. 3. Knowledge test.** Requires MnDOT to create a testing program for unmanned aircraft, and specifies components of testing and regulating commercial operator permit holders.
- Subd. 4. Unlawful commercial operations.** Creates a misdemeanor penalty for operating unmanned aircraft for commercial purposes without a permit or required liability insurance.
- Subd. 5. Liability insurance required.** Mandates, for commercial unmanned aircraft operation, liability insurance that provides for personal injury and property damage.
- Subd. 6. Rulemaking.** Authorizes MnDOT to adopt administrative rules on regulating unmanned aircraft for commercial purposes.
- 8** **Effective date.** Makes the bill effective January 1, 2017.