

**§ 15A-300.3. Use of an unmanned aircraft system near a confinement or correctional facility prohibited.**

(a) Prohibition. – No person, entity, or State agency shall use an unmanned aircraft system within either a horizontal distance of 500 feet, or a vertical distance of 250 feet from any local confinement facility, as defined in G.S. 153A-217, or State or federal correctional facility. For the purpose of this section, horizontal distance shall extend outward from the furthest exterior building walls, perimeter fences, and permanent fixed perimeter, or from another boundary clearly marked with posted notices. Posted notices shall be conspicuously posted not more than 100 yards apart along a marked boundary and comply with Department of Transportation guidelines.

(b) Exceptions. – Unless the use of the unmanned aircraft system is otherwise prohibited under State or federal law, the distance restrictions of subsection (a) of this section do not apply to any of the following:

- (1) A person operating an unmanned aircraft system with written consent from the official in responsible charge of the facility.
- (2) A law enforcement officer using an unmanned aircraft system in accordance with G.S. 15A-300.1(c).
- (3) A public utility, as defined in G.S. 62-3(23), a provider, as defined in G.S. 146-29.2(a)(6), or a commercial entity, provided that the public utility, provider, or commercial entity complies with all of the following:
  - a. The unmanned aircraft system must not be used within either a horizontal distance of 150 feet, or within a vertical distance of 150 feet from any local confinement facility or State or federal correctional facility.
  - b. Notifies the official in responsible charge of the facility at least 24 hours prior to operating the unmanned aircraft system. A commercial entity operating in compliance with G.S. 15A-300.1 and pursuant to the provisions of this subdivision is exempt from the 24-hour notice requirement.
  - c. Uses the unmanned aircraft system for the purpose of inspecting public utility or provider transmission lines, equipment, or communication infrastructure or for another purpose directly related to the business of the public utility, provider, or commercial entity.
  - d. Uses the unmanned aircraft system for commercial purposes pursuant to and in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration regulations, authorizations, or exemptions.
  - e. The person operating the unmanned aircraft system does not physically enter the prohibited space without an escort from the facility.
- (4) An emergency management agency, as defined in G.S. 166A-19.3, emergency medical services personnel, firefighters, and law enforcement officers, when using an unmanned aircraft system in response to an emergency.

(c) Penalty. – The following penalties apply for violations of this section:

- (1) A person who uses an unmanned aircraft system (i) in violation of subsection (a) of this section or (ii) pursuant to an exception in subsection (b) of this section and who delivers, or attempts to deliver, a weapon to a local confinement facility or State or federal correctional facility is guilty of a Class H felony, which shall include a fine of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500). For purposes of this subdivision, the term "weapon" is as defined in G.S. 14-401.24(c).

- (2) A person who uses an unmanned aircraft system (i) in violation of subsection (a) of this section or (ii) pursuant to an exception in subsection (b) of this section and who delivers, or attempts to deliver, contraband to a local confinement facility or State or federal correctional facility is guilty of a Class I felony, which shall include a fine of one thousand dollars (\$1,000). For purposes of this subdivision, the term "contraband" includes controlled substances, as defined in G.S. 90-87, cigarettes, alcohol, and communication devices, but does not include weapons.
- (3) A person who uses an unmanned aircraft system in violation of subsection (a) of this section for any other purpose is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor, which shall include a fine of five hundred dollars (\$500.00).

(d) Seizure, Forfeiture, and Disposition of Seized Property. – A law enforcement agency may seize an unmanned aircraft system and any attached property, weapons, and contraband used in violation of this section. An unmanned aircraft system used in violation of this section and seized by a law enforcement agency is subject to forfeiture and disposition pursuant to G.S. 18B-504. An innocent owner or holder of a security interest applying to the court for release of the unmanned aircraft system, in accordance with G.S. 18B-504(h), shall also provide proof of ownership or security interest and written certification that the unmanned aircraft system will not be returned to the person who was charged with the violation of subsection (a) of this section. The court shall forfeit and dispose of any other property, weapons, or contraband seized by a law enforcement agency in connection with a violation of this section pursuant to G.S. 18B-504, 14-269.1, 90-112, or any combination thereof. (2017-179, s. 1; 2024-15, s. 21(b).)