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## **As drone sales soar, vast majority of reports remain simple sightings**

***AMA's analysis also finds that some sightings appear to be users flying appropriately; "drone" continues to be a catch-all term for any object in the sky***

**MUNCIE, Ind.** – A new analysis released today by the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) reviews the 1,270 new unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) sightings reported by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) earlier this year. AMA's analysis finds that the vast majority of these sightings are just that – sightings. Importantly, when releasing the latest data, the FAA specifically stated that no collision between civilian aircraft and a civilian drone operator has been confirmed.

"In comparison to the growing number of drone sales and operators, the total number of UAS reports in the FAA's data is just a small fraction," said Rich Hanson, President of AMA. "Safety has always been our number one priority. That's why we're encouraged to see that most of the reports are mere drone sightings and do not appear to pose serious safety risks."

While the number of reports included in the FAA's latest data set increased, it covered a longer time period and occurred within the context of an increase in the number of people flying UAS. According to the Consumer Technology Association, drone sales reached [700,000 units](#) in 2015 and [2.4 million units](#) in 2016, an increase of 112 percent. And in late March 2017, the FAA announced that more than [770,000 UAS operators](#) have registered their drones with the FAA since the registration rule went into effect. The total number of drone sightings the FAA has reported – 2,616 since August 2015 – only accounts for 0.34 percent of the total number of registered operators.

Among the findings in AMA's new analysis of the FAA drone data:

- Consistent with what AMA found in the August 2015 and March 2016 data sets, some sightings included in the data set appear to involve people flying responsibly and in accordance with UAS guidelines. In the February 2017 data, AMA specifically identified 86 reports of drones flying at or below 400 feet.
- Like the previous data sets, the February 2017 data contains reports of several objects other than drones, including balloons, birds, a parasail, a "blob" and a "silver box." The term drone continues to be used as a "catch-all" for any object spotted in the sky.
- While the FAA has expressed its intent to punish careless and reckless operators, law enforcement notifications continue to decline. In the August 2015 data, nearly 20 percent of reports were not referred to local law enforcement or law enforcement notification was unknown. To compare, in the March 2016 data that number was 29 percent, and in the February 2017 data that number is 30 percent.

- The data includes 13 sightings that occurred in areas near wildfires or wildfire-related Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs). This is an increase from the previous two datasets in which only 4 of such sightings were reported.

AMA's complete analysis of the FAA data can be found here:

<https://www.modelaircraft.org/files/UASSightingsAnalysisbyAMA5-10-17.pdf>

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*The Academy of Model Aeronautics, founded in 1936 serves as the nation's collective voice for approximately 200,000 modelers in 2,400 clubs in the United States and Puerto Rico. Headquartered in Muncie, Indiana, AMA is a membership organization representing those who fly model aircraft for recreation and educational purposes. For more information, visit [www.modelaircraft.org](http://www.modelaircraft.org).*