

**Sponsors: Florida Municipal Electric Association; Southern California Public Power Authority;
Pennsylvania Municipal Electric Association**

In Support of Safe and Effective Drone Use by Public Power Utilities

1 The use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), or drones, by public power utilities is rapidly growing.
2 Public power utilities use drones to survey electric power equipment, assess damage, and aid in
3 construction and repair without risking harm to personnel or infrastructure, and do so in a cost-effective
4 manner.

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6 Despite this momentum, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules governing drone operations have
7 failed to keep pace with technological changes. The FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016
8 (Public Law No: 114-190) allowed the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to streamline the
9 regulatory processes for using drones during emergencies and disaster response efforts, and to design
10 rules for operating drones beyond the visual line of sight (BVLOS). Despite this becoming law in 2016,
11 the FAA still has not issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to govern drone operations during
12 emergencies or BVLOS. On May 16, 2024, President Biden signed into law the FAA Reauthorization Act
13 of 2024 (Public Law No: 118-63), which directs the FAA to publish an NPRM to establish a performance-
14 based framework for BVLOS drone operations. At a minimum, this proposed rule must establish
15 acceptable levels of risk for BVLOS drone operations, standards for pilots and operators, and an approval
16 process for drone operations in which the FAA can consider a drone's weight, speed limit, altitude limits,
17 and standoff distances from structures.

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19 Protecting critical energy infrastructure from the misuse of drones continues to grow in importance as the
20 use of drones becomes ubiquitous. Section 2209 of the FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016
21 directed the FAA to establish a process to allow applicants to petition the FAA to restrict UAS operation
22 in close proximity to fixed site facilities, including critical infrastructure involved in energy production,
23 transmission, or distribution. The rulemaking is anticipated to be released in the first half of 2025. It is
24 critical that energy infrastructure owners and operators have the ability to protect their critical
25 infrastructure from drones whether operated with malicious intent or not.

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27 **NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED:** That the American Public Power Association (APPA)
28 recognizes the value that unmanned aircraft systems (UAS or drones) provide in ensuring electric
29 reliability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That APPA strongly supports the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, and other relevant federal agencies continuing to create regulatory frameworks that allow UAS to safely reach their full potential; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That APPA supports Congress and federal agencies directing and developing rulemakings in support of drone operation for beyond the visual line of sight (BVLOS) and extended visual line of sight (EVLOS) operations. APPA recognizes that BVLOS and EVLOS are vital in ensuring worker safety, reduced inspection costs, and more effective disaster recovery efforts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That APPA supports continued federal, state, and local efforts to protect energy infrastructure from drone misuse.