



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Van Nuys Flight Standards District Office
16501 Sherman Way, Suite 330
Van Nuys, California, 91406

December 16, 2015

Erica Wade
Supervisor, Permit Operations
Film L.A., Inc.
6255 W. Sunset Blvd, 12th Floor
Hollywood, CA 90028

Dear Ms. Wade,

The motion picture and television industries utilize aircraft in support of their filming operations as both subject aircraft and behind-the-scenes aircraft. These aircraft are often required to be flown at altitudes and/or horizontal radii less than the minimums specified in the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR). Additionally, these aircraft are occasionally required to perform aerobatic maneuvers below the minimum 1,500 feet above the surface or in proximity to persons, property, or airspace. Operations of this kind require a Certificate of Waiver, issued to an operator, which allows the use of aircraft below the minimum altitudes and distances required for normal operations.

A Waiver Holder must submit a Plan of Activities (POA) to the Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) responsible for the area in which they operate only if the intended filming operation will require the aircraft to be used below the minimum altitudes and/or distances required by the FAR. When a FSDO receives a POA from a Waiver Holder, the FSDO reviews the documents, determines if the Waiver Holder is in compliance with the terms and conditions of their waiver, and accepts the POA if appropriate.

However, not all motion picture and television filming activities require the Waiver Holder to submit a POA to the local FSDO. If the aircraft is to be flown at altitudes and/or distances from persons or property that meet or exceed those required by FAR, no FAA acceptance is needed. In these situations, the Waiver Holder will not have, nor are they required to have, an FAA accepted POA to conduct these activities.

Waiver Holders using aircraft for aerial filming, such as beauty shots, plate shots, air to air filming or any other filming activity in which the aircraft will be flown at distances greater than that required by 14 CFR 91.119 (b) or (c), do not require an accepted POA to conduct filming operations. 14 CFR 91.119 (b) states that over a congested area, an aircraft cannot be operated closer than 1000 feet from the highest obstacle within a 2000 foot radius of the aircraft. 14 CFR 91.119 (c) requires, as a minimum, that an aircraft cannot not be operated closer than 500 feet from any person, vessel, vehicle or structure.

For example: A Waiver Holder using an aircraft (helicopter or airplane) to film downtown Los Angeles and the LA freeways, flying at an altitude greater than those sited above would not be required to submit a POA to the FSDO. Additionally, an aircraft being filmed taking off or landing at a public airport or helipad, as appropriate, would not be subject to the POA requirement *unless* camera crews, cast members or other authorized participants are to be *closer* than 500 feet from the aircraft for the purpose of filming.

Unlike manned aircraft, any use of an Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) aircraft for the purpose of motion picture and television filming requires a POA. UAS operators should submit a POA to the FSDO with geographic responsibility in every case. The filing of a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) does not constitute FSDO notification.

We are hoping to reduce the workload for your office, the FSDO and the waiver holders by educating the various entities from which permits are required for motion picture filming using aircraft. Please share this information with the appropriate personnel. Should you have any questions regarding the need for an FAA accepted POA, please feel free to call the FSDO for clarification.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By

Richard Swanson
Manager, Van Nuys Flight Standards District Office