

## Memo – Drone Tests at Payerne Airport

### 1. Introduction

Payerne Airport offers a secure and flexible environment for conducting flight tests and technological trials, particularly for drones and autonomous systems. Tests can take place on various aerodrome infrastructures (tarmac, taxiway, outdoor surfaces) or within the technology park, all within the controlled airspace of the Payerne CTR.

In order to ensure the safety of civil and military air operations as well as regulatory compliance, any company wishing to conduct tests must follow a preparation and acceptance process coordinated with the civil aerodrome, the competent authorities and the air navigation services.

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### 2. First step: initial contact and presentation meeting

Before any operational planning, the company must contact swiss aeropole to organize a presentation meeting.

This first meeting allows the project to be presented and several essential elements to be clarified:

- the expectations and needs of the parties
- the type of drone or aircraft used
- the objectives of the tests
- the intended test area
- the altitude and mission profile
- the infrastructures required on site
- the need or not for airspace activation
- the need for technical or regulatory support

This step also allows for an initial feasibility analysis and the identification of the regulatory steps required before conducting the tests.

At the end of this first phase, a proposal including the pricing conditions will be presented to the operator.

### 3. Verification of the regulatory framework

Operators must determine which regulatory category their operation falls under according to the applicable drone regulations.

For more information, visit the website of [the Federal Office of Civil Aviation \(FOCA\)](https://www.foca.ch).

If the operation complies with the requirements of the OPEN category (for example a drone under 25 kg, visual line-of-sight flight, altitude below 120 m AGL and compliance with safety rules), no prior authorization from FOCA is required. However, local coordination and a request for airspace use remain mandatory in Payerne due to the presence of controlled airspace.

If the operation does not meet the criteria of the OPEN category, it falls under the SPECIFIC category. In this case, the operator must carry out a risk assessment according to the SORA methodology and, where applicable, obtain FOCA authorization before conducting the tests. It is recommended to contact FOCA sufficiently early in the project preparation process.

The swiss aeropole community includes several companies active in consulting related to drone operations:

- [digisky](#)
- [Twenty H](#)
- [Vertical Master](#)
- [UASolutions](#)

#### 4. Project acceptance process at Payerne

Once the project has been presented, swiss aeropole carries out an initial analysis to determine whether the project requires a formal evaluation.

- A. If the project is simple and does not require an in-depth risk assessment, it can be accepted at the strategic level and the operator can then proceed with the necessary operational steps.
- B. If the project requires a more detailed analysis, a risk assessment inspired by the SORA methodology is carried out and consultations are conducted with the relevant partners, in particular the air base and the air navigation services.

Once the validations have been obtained, the operator is informed and may proceed with the steps required to carry out the flight.

In some cases, a project may be deemed inadmissible for safety reasons or due to incompatibility with mixed civil and military operations. In such cases, adaptations to the project may be proposed.

swiss aeropole and the relevant authorities reserve the right to approve or reject a project for reasons of safety, operations, or air traffic coordination. No detailed justification need necessarily be provided to the operator.

#### 5. Airspace use request (SFO Tool)

All drone flights in the Payerne CTR must be coordinated via the [Skyguide Special Flight Office platform \(SFO Tool\)](#).



## 5.1. Creation of a Request

The operator must submit a Request in the SFO Tool at least 10 working days before the first planned activity.

This Request describes the general parameters of the operation (flight area, altitude, period, type of aircraft and operator contact details) and allows Skyguide to assess the feasibility of the activity.

At Payerne, the period covered by a Request must not exceed one week.

Once the Request has been analyzed and validated, the operator can create flight activities.

## 5.2. Creation of Activities

Activities correspond to the individual flights planned within the framework of the Request.

They must be created in the SFO Tool no later than 12:00 (LT) on the working day preceding the activity.

The parameters of the Activity must remain within the limits defined in the Request (area, altitude, period).

## 5.3. Operational authorization

Before the start of the activity, the operator must contact the competent ATC unit in order to obtain final flight authorization<sup>1</sup>.

The notification in the SFO Tool does not constitute take-off authorization.

In the event of an emergency scramble of fighter aircraft, drone operations must be halted **immediately**. The POC will be contacted by the ATC unit if the procedure is triggered. The drone must be on the ground within 5 minutes of the call.

## 5.4. Operator Responsibility

The operator remains solely responsible at all times for the preparation, conduct, and safety of its flight operations, as well as for compliance with all applicable regulatory requirements, including those issued by the FOCA and air traffic control services.

The operator is required to strictly comply with the issued authorizations, operational limitations, and instructions transmitted via the SFO Tool and by ATC units.

swiss aeropole SA provides a testing framework and facilitates coordination with stakeholders, but assumes no liability in connection with the execution of flights or the operator's failure to comply with regulatory requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> The instructions provided as part of the authorization issued via Skyguide's SFO Tool take precedence over the general guidelines contained in this document

## 6. Procedure in case of incident or accident

Any incident related to drone operations (collision, fly-away, loss of link, crash or danger to persons/infrastructure) must be reported immediately.

The operator must contact without delay:

Control Tower Supervisor	044 823 61 13
Civil airport authority	026 662 66 70

The operator must provide the following information: nature of the event, drone position, last known altitude and estimated direction/trajectory.

The air base emergency services manage emergency situations at the airport.

After the event, the operator must cooperate with the airport authority and submit a civil incident report in accordance with the applicable procedures.

## 7. Sample Timeline for Preparing Drone Flight Tests

The preparation of flight tests in Payerne is part of a multi-phase planning process involving swiss aeropole, the civil aviation authority, the military authority, and Skyguide Air Navigation Services.

### D-20 | Strategic Planning

- Initial project presentation / kick-off meeting with swiss aeropole
- Definition of the Concept of Operations (CONOPS)
- Preliminary feasibility assessment (airspace, infrastructure, safety)
- Identification of test areas (runway, taxiway, undeveloped site, or dedicated airspace)
- Review of regulatory documentation as necessary (e.g., flight authorization, SORA / operational authorization)
- Preparation of the test campaign plan and cost estimate

### D-10 | Pre-operational coordination

- Assessment of airspace integration with Skyguide (swiss aeropole)
- Consultation with military authorities if necessary (swiss aeropole)
- Determination of operational time slots and coordination with air traffic control services (Swiss Aeropole)
- Submission of the special flight request via Skyguide's SFO tool

### D-1, 12:00 p.m., local time

- Creation and submission of individual SFO activities (flight reports)

### D-Day | Tactical Phase

- Operational coordination with air traffic control (ATC) and airport authorities;
- Final authorization from ATC prior to the activity (pre-flight call);
- Conducting flight tests;
- On-site operational assistance if necessary

### Post-flight | Operational follow-up



- Operational report
- Feedback on safety and operations / lessons learned to be shared with Swiss Aeropole
- Administrative follow-up and billing

The processing time may vary depending on the complexity of the project, regulatory requirements, and airspace constraints. For example, if approval from the FOCA or a complex SORA is required, the processing time could exceed 1 to 1.5 months.

## 8. Financial conditions and packages

swiss aeropole services are offered through fixed packages covering preparation, coordination, infrastructure access and basic operational support.

The packages listed below are provided for informational purposes only. Pricing terms may vary depending on the project, its level of complexity, and the client's status (particularly for resident companies).

### Initial Setup & Coordination

- Preparation and participation in the initial meeting
- Local support and coordination
- Operational and technical analysis
- Definition of scope and alignment of test requirements

### Test Day – Small Package

- Access to the testing area
- Support throughout the test day
- Access to basic infrastructure (toilets and kitchenette)
- Parking

### Test Day – Medium Package

- Access to the testing area
- Support throughout the test day
- Access to basic infrastructure (toilets and kitchenette)
- Parking
- Access to a small meeting room (up to 8 people)

### Test Day – Large Package

- Access to the testing area
- Support throughout the test day
- Access to basic infrastructure (toilets and kitchenette)
- Parking
- Access to the Failloubaz meeting room (up to 60 people)

### Off-site Test Day Package

- Remote operational support during the test day
- Optional on-site support upon request



## 9. Checklist

Before conducting a test campaign at Payerne, operators must follow the steps below and provide the necessary documents.

### Project preparation

- Contact swiss aeropole to organize a kick-off meeting
- Present the concept of operations (CONOPS) and the objectives of the tests
- Define the test area, altitude and mission profile
- Identify infrastructure needs (storage, tarmac, greenfield, GCS, energy, etc.)

### Regulatory verification

- Determine the regulatory category of the operation (OPEN or SPECIFIC)
- If necessary: prepare an internal or external SORA analysis
- Obtain FOCA authorization / Permit to Fly if applicable

### Local validation

- Submit the project to the civil aerodrome manager (POC) for feasibility analysis
- Coordination by swiss aeropole with the air base and Skyguide

### Airspace coordination

- If the project requires airspace activation (ATC ON state), specify it clearly in the request
- Create a Request in the SFO Tool ( $\geq$  10 working days before the activity, max. duration 1 week at Payerne)
- Create the Activities corresponding to the planned flights (no later than 12:00 LT on the previous working day)

### Operations

- Final coordination by phone with ATC just before the flight
- Conduct the tests in accordance with the authorizations obtained
- Debriefing and feedback after the test campaign

## 10. Hotels

### B&B de Lully

Location: Estavayer-le-Lac motorway exit

To benefit from the preferential rate, you can:

- by telephone: mention **swiss aeropole**
- by email: write **swiss aeropole**
- on the website: <https://www.hotel-bb.com/en/hotel/lully-3-lakes> enter the promotional code **SWISSAEROP**

Package:

- Standard single room: CHF 115 (breakfast included)
- Standard double room: CHF 130 (breakfast included)

Cancellation free of charge until 6.00 pm on the day of arrival.

Wi-Fi and parking: free of charge

