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From the Phoenix Business Journal:

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New FAA guidelines for drones clears way for this Scottsdale company to grow

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The Federal Aviation Administration released new rules recently that will help at least one Scottsdale company more rapidly expand.

The rules, released last week, provide clearer guidelines for commercial operators of drones, setting rules for operators, aircraft and operation. Drone operators are now required to be over the age of 16, have passed an FAA test and be vetted by the TSA.

Those new guidelines will make it much easier for Scottsdale-based Phoenix Drone Service to hire additional employees, said co-owner Brian Deatherage.

Previously, commercial drone operators had to be certified pilots, making hiring a tough task for the aerial photography business.

"It'll open up a lot of doors," said Deatherage in a phone interview. The company currently has 11 employees, with seven in Arizona, three in Chihuahua, Mexico and one in Costa Rica.

The new hiring guidelines will allow Phoenix Drone Service to "grow and scale our business," said Mark Yori, company co-owner.

"This absolutely benefits us," said Yori. "In regards to hiring there will be a great amount of freedom."

For the flying of drones, or unmanned aircraft systems, the FAA's new guidelines require that drones must be in the operator's line of sight, flown during the day, under 400 feet, kept below 100 miles per hour, and cannot fly above people or moving vehicles.



GOCE
A drone

Additionally, drones must be under 55 pounds and be registered.

But Phoenix Drone Service says these requirements can often be waived with a 333 exemption, which allows operators to fly drones outside of regulation, for activities such as flying the drone out of line of sight.

But commercial drone operators should still keep on their toes. While the new guidelines serve as a step forward in defining commercial use for drone businesses, they do not necessarily supersede other city or state laws regarding drones.

Terrence Jones, attorney at Ballard Spahr in Los Angeles, recently represented the first known drone-specific criminal case. His client was accused under the LA-specific anti-drone ordinance.

"Cities are taking it upon themselves to write laws," Jones said. While his client was found not guilty by the LA Superior Court, Jones said he is grateful for the new ordinances because they protect people like his client.

Even with a drone trial and new rules, Deatherage said the drone industry will only get larger with more competition and clients.

Previously, Deatherage said clients would be apprehensive in employing his business for drone footage.

"For example, ABC15 News wanted to use our drones instead of their helicopters, but they were nervous about regulations," Deatherage said. Now, he said, companies are less afraid to approach them for work.

As for competition, Deatherage said the likelihood of more drone business is inevitable, but that few other companies in the Valley offer the years of experience like his company.

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