

safety

FLY DRONES WITH CAUTION to avoid electrical issues

Whether you use drones for personal or professional purposes, it's crucial to keep electrical safety in mind to avoid putting yourself and others at risk.

Power lines are placed overhead primarily to keep them out of reach, as they can carry high voltage that may seriously injure or kill people if they are touched. When operators use drones near power lines, they should prioritize safety and give them plenty of space.

"Open areas are excellent places for people to fly drones, but they should keep them away from overhead power lines," said Jon Elkins, vice president of safety, training, and compliance of Indiana Electric Cooperatives. "While drones might seem safer than something like a kite, where there is a string a person may be holding when it comes into contact with power lines, they still present serious safety concerns."

A drone flying into a power line or electrical substation could cause power outages or lead to downed lines. Falling debris may also injure people. Should your drone get caught in power lines or crash into a utility pole or substation, never try to retrieve it yourself. Attempting to free the drone by entering a substation is not only criminal trespassing, but you can also be electrocuted. Call the electric cooperative or other utility company for assistance.

Don't touch a downed line or anything it has fallen on, such as a fence or a tree limb. Keep a safe distance from downed lines and tell others to do the same. Immediately call the utility and 911 to notify emergency personnel.

For safe drone operation, follow federal or state guidelines for registering your drone or getting business approval.

Chris Adam is a freelance writer from Lafayette.

BEFORE FLYING, CONSIDER THESE OTHER TIPS FROM THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (FAA):

BEFORE FLYING the drone, check it for damage. Have a damaged drone repaired before use.

NEVER fly drones higher than 400 feet.

DON'T fly the drone beyond your line of sight.

DON'T fly near airports, manned aircraft, stadiums, or people.

DON'T fly for commercial purposes unless specifically authorized by the FAA.

DON'T fly in bad weather conditions, such as low visibility or high winds.

NEVER fly your drone recklessly. You could be fined for endangering people or other aircraft.