

Experimental Drone Flights for Vaccine Delivery

Aim to provide last mile Healthcare access

Telangana Government may start trial by end of this month

ICMR earlier permitted to conduct Feasibility Study of Covid-19 Vaccine Delivery

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The Government is providing conditional exemption for experimental drone flights for vaccine delivery as part of constant endeavour to enhance the scope of drone usage in the country and assist the nation to fight COVID-19 pandemic. Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) & Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) have granted conditional exemption to the **Government of Telangana** for conducting experimental **Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) drone flights** for delivery of vaccines. Exemption has been granted from Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, 2021.

This exemption shall be subject to complete adherence to the conditions and the directions/ exemptions issued (or to be issued in future) by MoCA. This exemption shall be valid for a period of one year from the date of approval of the SOP or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Last month, the Government of Telangana was granted conditional exemption for conducting experimental delivery of Covid-19 vaccines within Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) Range using drones. To accelerate the drone deployment process to formulate application-based models, the grant has been extended to Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS). The trials may commence by end of May 2021.

Earlier, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) was granted conditional exemption last month for conducting feasibility study of Covid-19 vaccine delivery using drones in collaboration with IIT Kanpur.

The grant of these permissions is intended to achieve the dual objectives of faster vaccine delivery and improved healthcare access by ensuring primary healthcare delivery at the citizen's doorstep, limiting human exposure to COVID congested or COVID prone areas through aerial delivery, ensuring access to health care to the last mile, especially in remote areas, possible integration into the middle mile of medical logistics for long range drones and improving medical supply chain, with millions of doses to be transported across India.

One of the conditions for conducting experimental BVLOS drone flights for delivery of vaccines by Government of Telangana is that the maximum permitted height for drone operations is 400 feet Above Ground Level (AGL). It further says that Energy reserve of 15% of flight time should be provisioned for.

Another condition states that the Government of Telangana shall post a Single Point Coordinator (SPC) at Shamshabad ATC for the entire duration of the trial flights to ensure smooth coordination with ATC.

The conditions further mention that Drone operations shall be limited between local sunrise and local sunset. It is stated that Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC) should prevail at take-off and landing sites. Further, the condition is that weather limitations stipulated by the drone manufacturer shall be complied with.

The conditions specify some requirements to be satisfied for drones used for BVLOS trial flights. It is further stated in the conditions that upon completion of the trials, the Government of Telangana shall submit a detailed Proof of Concept to MoCA and DGCA.

For the order and detailed conditions, [please click here.](#)

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