

When using your Drone for flights on or over the tidal Thames (between Teddington and the Thames Estuary) you must always follow the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) regulations which are laid out in [The Drone and Model Aircraft Code](#). A summary of the key regulations is listed below for your convenience:

Drones <250g	Drones >250g
Always maintain a visual line of sight (VLOS) with the drone (use a spotter if necessary).	
Although a <250g drone may fly closer to people than 50m, you must not overfly crowds which includes open top passenger vessels.	Always maintain a safe distance of <b>at least 50m</b> (horizontally and vertically) from uninvolved vessels and people. Do not overfly crowds. This includes open top passenger vessels.
Maintain a safe distance (horizontally and vertically) from uninvolved people and vessels.	Always maintain a distance of <b>at least 150m</b> from commercial sites such as docks, piers or warehouses.
Do not operate the UAV in a dangerous or reckless manner.	
Comply with flight restriction zones and obtain the necessary NATS/ATC permissions.	

In addition to following all CAA regulations and seeking PLA permission\* when needed, when flying over the Tidal Thames you must:

- 1. Keep Clear of vessels.** Do not overfly, approach, or impede the passage of vessels navigating on the Thames. Always keep a safe distance of at least 50m (vertically and horizontally).
- 2. Maintain visual line of sight.** Always maintain visual line of sight with your drone and use a trained spotter if needed to help monitor its position and surroundings.
- 3. Consider closing speeds.** Vessels may be operating at speeds up to 35 mph (30 knots) and close to your position quickly, you must take this into account when determining the safe distance of your drone.
- 4. Be aware of crowds.** As persons on open-topped vessels cannot move away quickly the PLA considers these as a crowd. Under CAA guidance no drones, of any type, should overfly crowds.
- 5. Notification (Drones over 250g).** London VTS (24/7 Operations Centre) shall be informed **at least 30 minutes** before the UAV flight takes place and upon completion. Details on how to contact London VTS is as follows:
  - Teddington to Crayfordness (Dartford Creek/River Darent) - VHF 14 or by telephone 0203 260 7711
  - Crayfordness to Thames Estuary – VHF 68 or by telephone 01474 562215
- 6. Permissions.** It is your responsibility to gain all relevant permissions and abide by [NATS/ATZ airspace restrictions](#). Areas for which varying permissions are required include HMS President, London Eye, Battersea Heliport, Sky Ports Heliport, London City Airport, Greenwich Cable Car, Wapping Police Station, Houses of Parliament, and the MI6 building.

7. **Do not fly over/under bridges.** Drones should not fly over or under bridges. The Harbour Master considers any flight through a bridge arch as unsafe, posing a danger to navigation, and risking collision with both the structure and/or vessels; thus, not meeting the drone codes requirement to always fly safely. Any flight through a bridge arch will be reported to the police.

8. **Know what to do in an Emergency.** You must inform London VTS immediately if your UAV ditches in the Thames. Contact details are available here: <https://pla.co.uk/contact-us>

The Port of London Authority is responsible for the safety of navigation. Any UAV activity that endangers navigation will be reported to the Metropolitan Marine Police Unit and pursued within the remit of our legal powers.

For further information or queries regarding UAV operations over the Thames please contact our drone team at: [drone@pla.co.uk](mailto:drone@pla.co.uk)



**Remember, you must never put people in danger!**

### \*PLA Permissions

In some circumstances, where the Port of London Authority (PLA) has authority under [General Directions](#), [Thames Byelaws](#), or as a landowner, permission must be granted prior to flight. These circumstances include:

- Flights taking off or landing on a vessel
- Flights taking off or landing on the foreshore
- Multi-drone operations or displays that constitute an event (Event organiser guide | Port of London Authority)

In these cases, drone operators must notify the PLA at least **three (3) working days** in advance to allow the Harbour Master to assess of any potential impact on river safety. Please notify us as early as possible, providing full details via our [Drone Flight Notification Portal](#).

**Submit your flight information via our  
Drone Online Notification Portal**



Once satisfied that the flight poses no hazard to navigation, the PLA will respond accordingly. Some flights may require additional controls to protect river users, and our team will follow up with any further questions.

If your drone flight requires PLA permission and involves filming or photography, you must obtain both **flight approval** and a separate **filming permit**. For more information on filming/photography permits visit our website: [Filming, photography and events on the tidal Thames](#).

For multi-drone operations deemed an event, **four weeks' notice is required**. Application for drone events should be made in accordance with [Event organiser guide](#).

**NOTE:** The drone operator / applicant is responsible for ensuring all permissions / consents have been applied for and granted. The PLA accepts no liability for issues arising due to failure of the operator to gain such necessary consents.