

Notification

Langen, 14 July 2026

DFS information on new procedures for UAS flights in control zones

With effect from 6 August 2026, DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung GmbH (DFS) is introducing new procedures for UAS flights in the control zones (CTR) of the following airports:

- Berlin Brandenburg
- Dresden
- Erfurt Weimar
- Hamburg
- Cologne Bonn
- Munich
- Nürnberg
- Stuttgart
- Bremen
- Düsseldorf
- Frankfurt Main
- Hannover
- Leipzig Halle
- Münster Osnabrück
- Saarbrücken

1. Basis

For UAS flights in controlled airspace (such as control zones), an air traffic control clearance (ATC clearance) is required under Section 21(1)(5) of the German Aviation Regulation (LuftVO). For UAS flights that meet specific conditions, this clearance applies automatically. This is referred to as a general ATC clearance. For all other UAS flights, an individual ATC clearance must be requested.

The regulations governing this have been updated and are published in NfL 2026-1-3960. Upon its entry into effect, the previous NfL 2023-1-2705 (General administrative order, *Allgemeinverfügung*) will be cancelled. This information letter outlines the key points of the new DFS regulations.

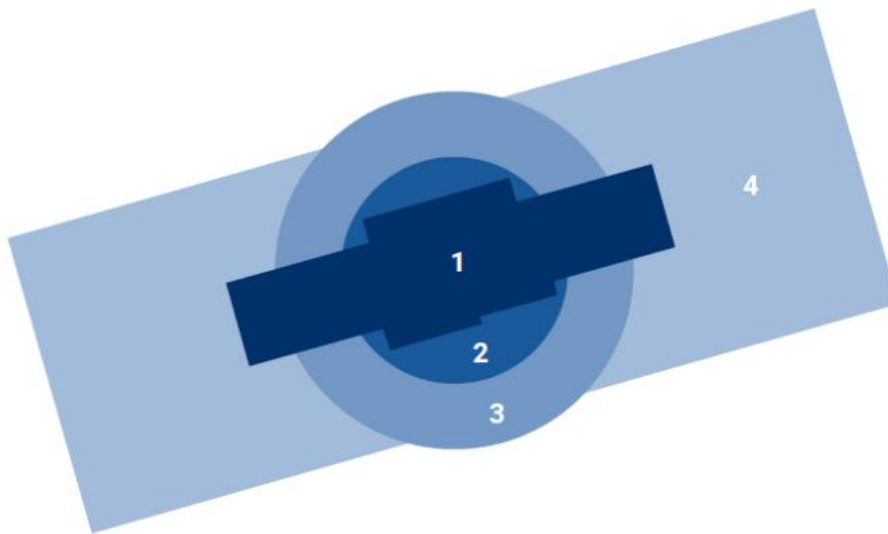
2. Division of control zones into inner and outer areas for UAS operations

The DFS control zones are now divided into an inner and an outer area for UAS operations. A total of 4 zones have been defined for this purpose. The CTR inner area corresponds to Zone 1. The CTR outer area comprises Zones 2 to 4.

- **Zone 1:** The area above the airport and within a lateral distance of 1 km from its boundary, as well as 5 km beyond the beginning and end of the runways – over a width of 1 km to the left and right of the centreline of the runway (corresponding to

the geographical area under Section 21(h)(3)(2) of the German Aviation Regulation (LuftVO))

- **Zone 2:** The area defined by a circle with a radius of 4 km centred on the aerodrome reference point (ARP) outside Zone 1
- **Zone 3:** The area defined by a circle with a radius of 6 km centred on the aerodrome reference point (ARP) outside Zones 1 and 2
- **Zone 4:** The entire remaining area of the control zone outside Zones 1 to 3



3. Permitted heights under the general ATC clearance and cases where an individual ATC clearance is needed

3.1 In the CTR inner area

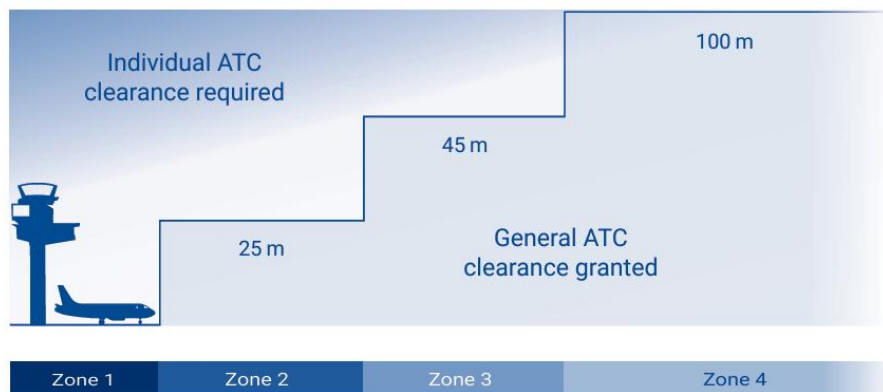
In the CTR inner area (Zone 1), an individual ATC clearance is always required and must be requested, regardless of the intended UAS height. This can be done online via the DFS website at <https://ais.dfs.de>. You will then receive further information by e-mail on whether an ATC clearance will be granted, how you can obtain one and what conditions apply. Please note that a lead time of 14 days is usually required to process the request.

3.2 In the CTR outer area

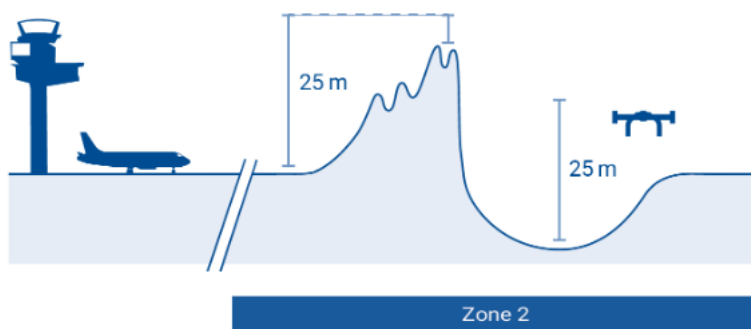
In the CTR outer area, a general ATC clearance for flights in Zones 2 to 4 is automatically granted through the new general administrative order issued by DFS (NfL 2026-1-3960), provided all the requirements and conditions set out in section 2 of NfL 2026-1-3960 are met. The maximum cleared heights are generally as follows:



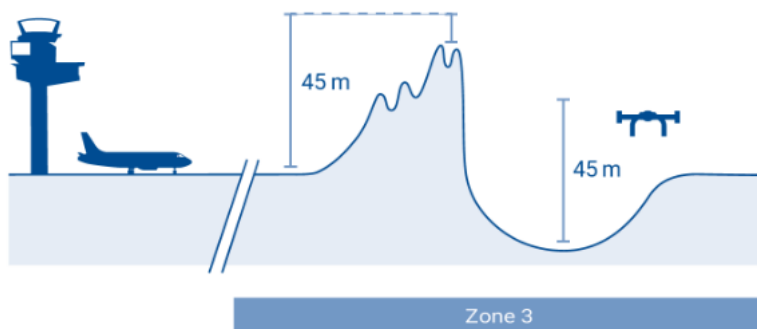
DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung



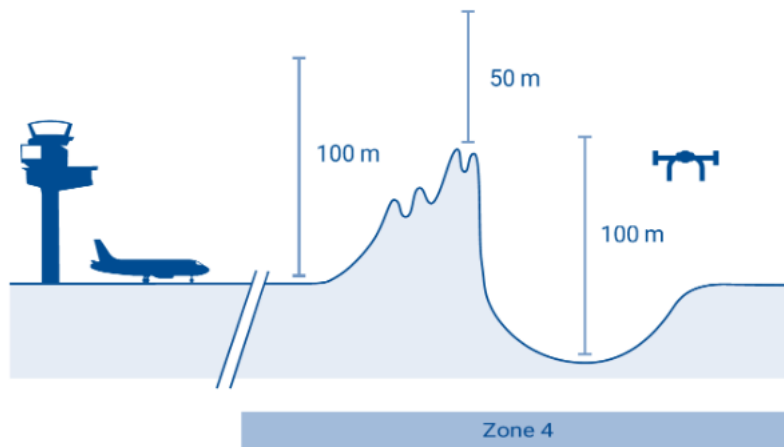
Zone 2: 25 m above aerodrome elevation or above ground level (whichever is lower).



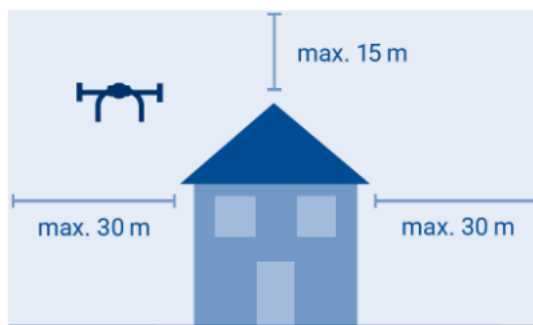
Zone 3: 45 m above aerodrome elevation or above ground level (whichever is lower).



Zone 4: 100 m above aerodrome elevation or 50 m above ground level (whichever is greater) If the UAS take-off location in Zone 4 is below the aerodrome elevation, the maximum permitted height is 100 m above ground level.



In addition, there is a general ATC clearance for UAS flights in the CTR outer area, provided these are conducted close to obstacles. A flight is considered to be close to an obstacle if, at no point, the UAS is more than 30 m to the side of or 15 m above an obstacle. This applies regardless of the height of the obstacle.



3.3 Determination of the maximum permissible height

When determining the maximum UAS height under a general ATC clearance, the remote pilot must now take into account the location of the UAS flight area within the control zone, the terrain elevation at that location and the aerodrome elevation. Should the maximum heights specified above be exceeded, or should it not be possible to comply with the conditions set out in NfL 2026-1-3960, an individual ATC clearance must be requested, as is the case for Zone 1 (see 3.1).

Examples:

1. Determination of the maximum permitted UAS height with a general ATC clearance under NfL 2026-1-3960 for UAS flights in Zone 4 of a control zone with an aerodrome elevation of 48 m MSL (relative to mean sea level)
 - a. Height of the UAS take-off location: 55 m MSL (i.e. above aerodrome elevation)



- Maximum UAS height at the take-off location above ground level with a general ATC clearance:
 $100\text{ m} - (55\text{ m} - 48\text{ m}) = 93\text{ m}$, $93\text{ m} > 50\text{ m}$ (the larger value applies) → 93 m above ground level
- b. Height of the UAS take-off location: 105 m MSL (i.e. above aerodrome elevation)
 - Maximum UAS height at the take-off location above ground level with a general ATC clearance:
 $100\text{ m} - (105\text{ m} - 48\text{ m}) = 43\text{ m}$, $43\text{ m} < 50\text{ m}$ (the larger value applies) → 50 m above ground level
- c. Height of the UAS take-off location: 40 m MSL (i.e. below aerodrome elevation)
 - This means → 100 m above ground level
- 2. Flying near a 150-metre-high wind turbine in Zone 4, while maintaining a maximum distance of 30 m to the side of and 15 m above the wind turbine
 - Flying close to an obstacle → Height of the obstacle (150 m) + 15 m → 165 m above ground level

4. Detailed information on the zones and permitted height limits

The zones and aerodrome elevations are

- promulgated as a supplement (SUP) to the German Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP IFR) (<https://aip.dfs.de/basicAIP>) and
- published on the Federal Ministry of Transport's (BMV) Digital Platform for Unmanned Aviation (dipul) (dipul.de).

It is recommended that you use dipul's Map Tool to determine the terrain elevation at the UAS take-off location (maptool-dipul.dfs.de).

5. Other important provisions

Under the new regulations, UAS flights within visual line of sight (VLOS), beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) and swarm flights are generally permitted. In all cases, the remote pilot:

- must check and ensure before the start of the flight that all other prerequisites for the planned UAS operation are met (such as operational authorisation, no flights in restricted or prohibited areas, compliance with the geographical areas specified in Section 21h of the LuftVO, no autonomous operation),
- will not receive any traffic information regarding other manned or unmanned aircraft from the local aerodrome control unit,
- must expect other manned and unmanned aircraft to be present at any time within the control zone,
- is responsible for avoiding collisions with other manned and unmanned aircraft and, in particular, must give way to manned aircraft,
- must ensure that there is a ground visibility of at least 800 metres,

- has no entitlement to be granted an individual ATC clearance. The aerodrome control unit may impose additional conditions on the issuance of ATC clearances, or refuse or withdraw ATC clearances, in particular due to traffic volume.

The full and exact conditions and requirements are promulgated by Nfl 2026-1-3960. These alone are binding.

If you require further clarification regarding the new procedures, please send an enquiry to futureairmobility@dfs.de.

DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung GmbH (DFS), the German air navigation service provider, is a State-owned company under private law with 5,900 employees as at 30 June 2026. DFS ensures the safe and punctual flow of air traffic over Germany. Around 2,200 air traffic controllers guide more than three million flights through German airspace in peak years, up to 10,000 flights every day. The company operates control centres in Bremen, Karlsruhe, Langen and Munich as well as control towers at the 15 designated international airports in Germany. The subsidiary DFS Aviation Services GmbH markets and sells products and services related to air navigation services and provides air traffic control at nine regional airports in Germany and at Edinburgh Airport in the United Kingdom. DFS is working on the integration of drones into air traffic and has set up a joint venture, Droniq GmbH, with Deutsche Telekom. Other subsidiaries include R. Eisenschmidt GmbH, which markets publications and products for general aviation, and Kaufbeuren ATM Training GmbH (KAT), which provides training for military air traffic services personnel. The joint venture FCS Flight Calibration Services GmbH offers flight inspection services.