



**August 4, 2025**

**Submitted electronically via <http://www.regulations.gov>**

Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20591

**Re: CDA Comments on FAA Notice of Rescission of FAA Order 1050.1F, Availability of FAA Order 1050.1G, Request for Comments (Docket No. FAA-2025-1571)**

To Whom It May Concern:

The Commercial Drone Alliance (“CDA”)<sup>1</sup> appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on the Federal Aviation Administration’s (“FAA”) “Notice of Rescission of FAA Order 1050.1F, Availability of FAA Order 1050.1G, Request for Comments” (hereafter “Order 1050.1G” or the “Order”).<sup>2</sup> For the reasons set forth below, the CDA strongly supports the FAA’s efforts to streamline environmental review procedures in FAA Order 1050.1G, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”), and encourages the FAA to leverage procedures such as categorical exclusions (“CATEXs”) to support the expansion of unmanned aircraft systems (“UAS” or “drones”) for commercial package delivery operations. Further, streamlining NEPA review will help normalize safe, scalable, and economically viable commercial UAS package delivery operations in the United States.

- a. *Leverage the reevaluation process to efficiently evaluate changes to UAS operations specifications subject to NEPA*

The environmental review process is currently one of the most costly and burdensome pieces of the regulatory framework required to conduct UAS package delivery operations in the United States, inhibiting domestic progress and technology adoption nationwide. Despite this fact, in this revised

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<sup>1</sup> The CDA is an independent non-profit organization led by key leaders in the commercial drone industry. The CDA actively participates in rulemakings and policy efforts to facilitate the safe and secure development and expansion of commercial drone operations. The CDA works with all levels of government to collaborate on policies for industry growth and seeks to educate the public on the safe and responsible use of commercial drones to achieve economic benefits and humanitarian gains. We bring together commercial drone end-users, manufacturers, service providers, advanced air mobility companies, drone security companies, and vertical markets including oil and gas, precision agriculture, construction, security, communications technology, infrastructure, newsgathering, filmmaking, and more. Learn more at <https://www.commercialdronealliance.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> See 90 Fed. Reg. 29,615 (July 3, 2025).

Order, the FAA appears to be doubling down on the previous administration's approach, as the new version of this Order adds the "[i]ssuance of new or amended Operations Specifications to an operator for UAS operations conducted under 14 CFR Part 135" as the type of action that 'normally' requires an environmental assessment ("EA"). The CDA strongly believes the issuance of amended UAS operations specifications ("OpSpecs") can be efficiently and effectively evaluated using the reevaluation process set forth in Part 3 of the Order, particularly (but not only) when the amendment simply expands the area of operations to materially similar operating environments.

In practice, each time a drone operator seeks to initiate operations at a new site or expand operations at an existing site, the FAA has undertaken NEPA review, typically in the form of an EA. However, the FAA could immediately begin leveraging its reevaluation process to avoid requiring a costly, lengthy, and cumbersome environmental review for each change to or expansion of an operator's delivery operations. The reevaluation process enables environmental review of the specific changes to conclude whether the EA is still valid and permits FAA to issue an approval conditioned by specific mitigating requirements (if necessary). Given the history of EAs and Finding of No Significant Impacts ("FONSI") associated with environmental review of both new and amended OpSpecs for UAS operations, reevaluation would be an effective way to rely on existing environmental documents consistent with the Trump Administration's clear desire to streamline the environmental review process.<sup>3</sup> Based on the reevaluation process undertaken at other DOT agencies, CDA understands that this process may be as straightforward as preparing a note to the file documenting that the EA remains valid when warranted by the circumstances. The CDA encourages the FAA to reconsider its approach to drone delivery OpSpecs to improve the current process, rather than codifying the current broken approach, and leverage the reevaluation process pursuant to its revised Order to enable drone delivery innovation to safely scale in the United States. Using the reevaluation process would allow FAA to immediately streamline the current environmental review process while it proceeds with developing other alternatives discussed below.

- b. *To the extent the FAA determines NEPA review is required for UAS operations, it should leverage CATEX provisions to develop a UAS-specific CATEX; or, as an alternative, adopt and apply existing CATEXs from other agencies to UAS operations.*

The CDA commends the FAA's efforts to clarify procedures relating to CATEXs and guidance surrounding the adoption of CATEXs from other agencies that may apply to FAA-related projects. However, FAA could go one step further to expand its list of CATEXs to identify and adopt CATEXs specifically applicable to UAS operations, including package delivery operations, and leverage the CATEXs from other agencies that may apply to UAS. While the Order currently lists a number of CATEXs, there is no CATEX that explicitly applies to UAS delivery operations. The FAA has already conducted several EAs for UAS operations, each time reaching a FONSI. These FONSI determinations provide the basis for FAA to develop a UAS-specific CATEX given the absence of significant adverse effects, individually or in the aggregate.

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, since January 2025, the Trump Administration has directed federal agencies to streamline NEPA procedures, including directing the Council on Environmental Quality ("CEQ") to remove its NEPA implementing regulations. See *CEQ, Removal of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations*, 90 Fed. Reg. 10610 (Feb. 25, 2025). Such actions are consistent with the Administration's day-one Executive Order 14154, *Unleashing American Energy*. 90 Fed. Reg. 8353 (Jan. 29, 2025). In addition to the FAA, a number of federal agencies and DOT operating administrations, including the Department of Energy ("DOE"), Department of Interior ("DOI"), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ("FERC"), Department of Commerce ("DOC"), and Department of Defense ("DOD") have updated their NEPA regulations and guidance.

In parallel, CDA supports and encourages the FAA to adopt CATEXs from other agencies, consistent with the procedures outlined in Order 1050.1G § 1.4(d), that would apply to UAS operations. Pursuant to section 1.4(d), the FAA may adopt and apply a CATEX listed in another agency's NEPA procedures to a proposed action or a category of proposed actions. For example, the FAA could adopt Department of the Air Force ("DAF") CATEX 11 (previously codified in 32 C.F.R. Part 989, Appendix B as A2.3.11) (hereafter "CATEX 11") which provides exclusion of "[a]ctions similar to other actions which have been determined to have an insignificant impact in a similar setting as established in an EIS or an EA resulting in a FONSI."<sup>4</sup> The CDA encourages the FAA to consider the following proposed framework for application of DAF CATEX 11 to drone package delivery:

- First, the FAA is well-situated to apply DAF CATEX 11 to drone delivery operations. Indeed, FAA has already made FONSI determinations in nearly 30 completed EAs to date for drone package delivery operations in areas such as: Dallas-Fort Worth Texas; greater North Carolina; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Fayetteville, Holly Springs, Raeford, and Pinehurst North Carolina;; Central Florida; The Villages, Florida Granbury and Rowlett, Texas; College Station, Texas; Tolleson, Arizona; Salt Lake City, Utah and surrounding area; Lockeford, California; Pea Ridge, Arkansas and the surrounding area; Kannapolis, North Carolina and the surrounding area; Frisco and little Elm, Texas; and Christiansburg, Virginia.<sup>5</sup>
- Second, DAF CATEX 11 applies to proposed actions in a "similar setting" as an established EA resulting in a FONSI. With respect to drone package delivery operations, the EA analysis of the impacts of the aircraft and any associated handling activities on the ground does not vary based on drone operation. Rather, the route is the only aspect that would vary across drone delivery operations.
- Third, the FAA may consider adopting a CATEX for the portion of the proposed action that is consistent and applicable to each intended operation and accept an applicant-prepared EA for the remaining aspect of the operation with respect to the varying package delivery routes, consistent with the applicant-prepared EA procedures in Order 1050.1G. To address potentially highly noise-sensitive areas, the FAA may also consider using the process outlined in section 1.4(f)(2) to consider the application of a CATEX, notwithstanding that an "extraordinary circumstance" may apply to the proposed UAS operation and therefore warrants the applicability of a CATEX. Pursuant to section 1.4(f)(2)(ii), the FAA may "modif[y] the proposed agency action" to avoid adverse significant effects. This process is similar to a

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Defense National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures: Appendix A Department of Defense Categorical Exclusions (CATEX) (June 30, 2025), [https://www.denix.osd.mil/nepa/denix-files/sites/55/2025/06/DOD-NEPA-Procedures-APPENDIX-A\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.denix.osd.mil/nepa/denix-files/sites/55/2025/06/DOD-NEPA-Procedures-APPENDIX-A_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., FAA, *Finding of No Significant Impact and Record of Decision for Wing Aviation, LLC Proposed Drone Package Delivery Operations in Central Florida* (May 30, 2025), [https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced\\_operations/nepa\\_and\\_drones/20250530\\_Wing\\_Central\\_FL\\_EA\\_FONSI-ROD\\_Signed.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced_operations/nepa_and_drones/20250530_Wing_Central_FL_EA_FONSI-ROD_Signed.pdf); FAA, *Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact/ Record of Decision for Wing Aviation, LLC Proposed Drone Package Delivery Operations in Dallas–Fort Worth, Texas* (Nov. 2023), [https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced\\_operations/nepa\\_and\\_drones/Final\\_EA\\_for\\_Wing\\_at\\_DFW\\_Nov23\\_ADA\\_Signed.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced_operations/nepa_and_drones/Final_EA_for_Wing_at_DFW_Nov23_ADA_Signed.pdf); FAA, *Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment, Mitigated Finding of No Significant Impact, and Record of Decision for Drone Package Delivery in North Carolina* (July 2024), [https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced\\_operations/nepa\\_and\\_drones/FONSI\\_ROD\\_Final\\_PEA\\_for\\_Drone\\_Package\\_Delivery\\_in\\_NC.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced_operations/nepa_and_drones/FONSI_ROD_Final_PEA_for_Drone_Package_Delivery_in_NC.pdf). The remaining list of EA/FONSIs is listed on the FAA's webpage "Public Involvement and Environmental Review for Drone Operations", available at [https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced\\_operations/nepa\\_and\\_drones](https://www.faa.gov/uas/advanced_operations/nepa_and_drones).

mitigated FONSI, which the FAA has issued for a prior UAS package delivery operation in North Carolina.<sup>6</sup>

c. *The CDA supports the FAA's effort to develop a nationwide EA in accordance with FAA Order 1050.1G.*

In parallel, the CDA encourages the FAA to continue pursuing a nationwide EA, while working deliberately and expeditiously with the regulated community to develop the appropriate scope of the EA in accordance with the Order. A “nationwide” approach is consistent with Congress’ mandate in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, in which Congress directed the FAA to “examine and integrate programmatic-level approaches to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act” and “leverage an environmental review for unmanned aircraft operations within a defined geographic region” as well as “leverage an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement for nationwide programmatic approaches for large scale distributed unmanned aircraft operations.”<sup>7</sup> A nationwide EA would allow the FAA to apply a tiered approach to evaluating the effect of subsequent UAS operations while streamlining NEPA review, consistent with the Administration’s goals and FAA Order 1050.1G, and enable drone delivery companies continue to expand across the United States.

Specifically, the CDA urges the FAA to undertake the following actions. First, the FAA should review existing NEPA data, EAs and FONSIs to determine current geographic range and/or operational scope of drone operations that have previously worked through the NEPA process. Second the FAA should determine whether any aspects are covered by an existing CATEX or another agency’s applicable CATEX. Third, the FAA should identify any areas of significance for review. Finally, consistent with Section 3.7, the FAA should use the existing data to make a timely determination of the size and scope of the programmatic, nationwide EA.

d. *Additional Comments to Streamline the NEPA Process.*

The CDA offers the following additional comments in support of the FAA’s effort to streamline the NEPA review process for UAS:

- The CDA supports Section 1.3(d), which permits an applicant or a contractor hired by the applicant to prepare an EA or EIS under FAA’s supervision. To implement this provision, the CDA recommends that FAA formalize procedures for an applicant-prepared EA/EIS to ensure a more streamlined and transparent process.
- In Section 3.8, the CDA supports FAA’s decision to act concurrently “to the fullest extent possible” as it implements Congress’ intent in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.
- In Section 3.1(b), the CDA appreciates the FAA’s express statement that programmatic NEPA documents remain valid for five years, provided there are no substantial new circumstances or information about the significance of adverse effects that bear on the analysis.

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<sup>6</sup> See supra, note 5.

<sup>7</sup> FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. L. No. 118-63, tit. IX, § 909(c) (2024).

The CDA appreciates the FAA's consideration of these comments and supports the FAA's commitment to ensuring a streamlined environmental review process, while allowing the commercial drone package delivery industry to continue to move forward. Such efforts will support the successful deployment of these technologies and the realization of the countless public benefits of UAS operations for Americans, American businesses, and American communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Ellman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Lisa Ellman  
Chief Executive Officer  
Commercial Drone Alliance