

## Pilots warn of further drone near-misses after reports more than double in 2016

Pilots have cautioned that 2017 could see even more close calls involving drones and aircraft – or perhaps even a collision – as figures show reports increased by more than double on the previous year.

With drones one of the most sought-after Christmas gifts once again in 2016, the British Airline Pilots' Association has expressed concern that this could lead to a serious incident if users don't follow the rules.

In total in 2016 there were 69 reported incidents of drone near-misses with aircraft, up from 29 in 2015. In 2013 there was zero.

BALPA says while we should welcome and embrace drone technology, users, particularly hobbyists, need to ensure they are educated in the rules of where and how to fly their drones and take full responsibility for doing so.

Steve Landells, BALPA Flight Safety Specialist, said:

“Drones can be great fun and we're not surprised at their popularity over Christmas as people received them as presents.

“However, after a significant increase in near-misses last year it seems not everyone who is flying them either know or care about the rules that are in place for good reason.

“That's why we're urging anyone who has a drone to take a look at the Civil Aviation Authority's 'drone code' and be proactive in educating themselves on the rules.

“While we take no issue with people who fly their drones in a safe and sensible manner, some people who fly them near airports or densely populated areas are behaving dangerously.

“Measures should be put in place that will allow the police to identify and locate anyone who flies a drone in an irresponsible way.

“Owing to the huge numbers of drones being sold, more technological solutions will undoubtedly be required to address this problem and should be mandated.

“These should include, amongst other things, geofencing as standard and a system whereby the drone transmits enough data for the police to locate the operator when it is flown in a dangerous manner.

“If the user has endangered an aircraft, we would like to see the culprit prosecuted; endangering an aircraft has a maximum sentence of five years in prison.”

You can read the CAA's drone code here: <http://dronesafe.uk/>