



The Comprehensive Real Estate Drone Pre-Flight Checklist

Operating drones in urban and suburban environments for real estate photography requires strict adherence to EASA regulations, national privacy laws, and GDPR. Use this multi-phase checklist to protect your operator license, limit your liability, and execute safe, compliant flights.

PHASE 1: OFFICE & ADMINISTRATION (PRE-SHOOT)

Ensure all pilot qualifications and equipment registrations are active and compliant with the EASA framework before accepting the client mandate.

1.1 Pilot & Operator Credentials

- ☐ **Valid Operator Registration:** I am registered as a UAS Operator in my home EU Member State.
- ☐ **Operator ID Displayed:** My unique UAS Operator ID is clearly labeled on the drone (or uploaded to the remote ID system).
- ☐ **A1/A3 Certificate:** I hold a valid Open Category A1/A3 Proof of Completion (minimum requirement for C0/C1).
- ☐ **A2 Certificate (If Applicable):** I hold a valid A2 Remote Pilot Certificate of Competency for operating C2 drones in populated areas.
- ☐ **Commercial Insurance:** I have verified that my insurance complies with EU Directive 785/2004 for commercial aerial activities, explicitly covering privacy infringement liabilities.

1.2 Equipment Verification

- ☐ **C-Class Identification:** The aircraft possesses a clear C0, C1, or C2 label required for operation near residential zones. *(Legacy drones >250g without C-labels are restricted to A3—150m away from properties).*
- ☐ **Firmware & Geofencing:** Drone firmware, controller app, and manufacturer geofencing databases are updated to the latest versions.
- ☐ **Payload Security:** Gimbal, lenses, and filters are securely attached, with no loose elements that could detach during maneuvering over property.

PHASE 2: FLIGHT PLANNING & AIRSPACE (SITE ASSESSMENT)

Every property is unique. Conduct a digital survey of the airspace and privacy boundaries before arriving on-site.

2.1 Airspace & Geo-Zone Check

- ☐ **Official Airspace Map:** Verified the property location using the official National Aviation Authority (NAA) digital map (do not rely solely on manufacturer apps like DJI Fly).
- ☐ **Restricted Zones:** Confirmed the property does not overlap with restricted zones (e.g., helipads, prisons, embassies, critical infrastructure).
- ☐ **Flight Authorizations:** If in a restricted or controlled traffic region (CTR), requested and received written authorization from air traffic control or the zone manager.

2.2 Privacy & GDPR Assessment

- ☐ **Client Consent:** Obtained explicit written consent from the property owner/client to overfly the land and capture media.
- ☐ **Line of Sight Analysis:** Identified potential privacy risks from adjacent properties (e.g., neighbor's backyards, large windows, pools). Plan flight paths to point the camera inward toward the client's property.
- ☐ **Neighbor Notification (Recommended):** Prepared standard notification flyers to drop in adjacent mailboxes if the operation requires hovering near property lines.

Safety Buffer Rule Verification (A2 Category)

If flying a C2 class drone (up to 4kg) under the Open A2 category, you are legally obligated to maintain specific horizontal distances from uninvolved people (neighbors, pedestrians, traffic).

- **Standard Rule:** Maintain a 30-meter horizontal distance.
- **Low-Speed Mode Rule:** You may reduce this to 5 meters **ONLY** if the drone's low-speed mode (< 3m/s) is activated. *Have you confirmed your drone supports and is set to low-speed mode for this shoot?*

2.3 Environmental Factors

- ☐ **Weather Minimums:** Checked local wind speeds, KP index (GPS interference), and precipitation forecasts. Ensure conditions are within the manufacturer's safe operational limits.
- ☐ **Sun Position:** Planned the flight time (e.g., Golden Hour) to ensure optimal lighting for real estate imagery without facing direct sun glare that compromises Visual Line of Sight (VLOS).

PHASE 3: ON-SITE EXECUTION & POST-FLIGHT

On location, safety and data protection are paramount. Execute the flight smoothly and handle the resulting data according to EU law.

3.1 Site Setup & Ground Control

- ☐ **Physical Inspection:** Walked the property to identify unmapped obstacles (power lines, dead tree branches, construction cranes).
- ☐ **Takeoff/Landing Zone (TOAL):** Established a clear, flat takeoff area away from foot traffic, cars, and overhangs.
- ☐ **Bystander Briefing:** Briefed the real estate agent, clients, or anyone present on site to remain behind the pilot and avoid distracting conversation during the flight.
- ☐ **Visual Line of Sight (VLOS):** Confirmed the planned flight paths allow continuous unaided visual contact with the aircraft at all times. No flying blindly behind the house.

3.2 Post-Flight & Data Scrubbing

- ☐ **Aircraft Inspection:** Checked the drone post-flight for prop damage, motor heat, or payload issues before packing away.
- ☐ **Data Review (PII Check):** Reviewed all raw photos and video for accidental capture of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) of uninvolved third parties.
- ☐ **Anonymization:** Blurred or cropped out neighboring license plates, recognizable faces on sidewalks, or interiors of adjacent houses visible through windows before delivering assets to the client.
- ☐ **Secure Storage:** Stored and transferred final files securely to the client, deleting raw footage containing unnecessary PII in accordance with GDPR data retention principles.

Are Your Certifications Up to Date?

Complex residential shoots and dense urban environments often require more than the basic A1/A3 license. Earning your **A2 Certificate of Competency** or **STS-01 Authorization** unlocks the ability to fly heavier professional rigs closer to properties legally.

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