

If This Is Your First Radio-Controlled Airplane...

An especially important issue for so-called “park flyers” and “backyard flyers”:

Your model probably operates on one of the 72 mhz band “aircraft model” frequencies allocated for our use by the Federal Communications Commission. There are other frequencies in the 75 mhz band set aside for “surface models” such as cars and boats. It is a violation of federal law to operate a car or boat on a 72 mhz frequency, or a plane on the 75 mhz band. Furthermore, **if two models closer than about 3 miles from each other try to operate on the same frequency, they could “jam” each other’s controls, causing one or both models to crash.** For example, if your back yard was within 3 miles of another flying site, and someone else was flying their model on the same frequency as your backyard model, ***you*** could cause ***them*** to lose control and crash. That could result in property damage, personal injury and even death! Meanwhile, ***they*** could cause ***your*** model to crash as well, also possibly causing more injuries, property damage, and death. **Check with AMA and your local hobby shops to find all the local clubs in your area, then contact those clubs and verify that your intended flying area is a safe distance from other flying sites. When you go out to fly, watch for other flyers in your area and check that your radio’s frequency doesn’t conflict with theirs.** If you take this responsible sort of approach, not only will you save your fellow RC modelers a lot of trouble, but you might make some new friends as well!

R/C models are not toys. They are real airplanes, and they obey the same laws of physics. The only significant differences are that they don’t weigh as much as the “big ones”, and the pilot is standing on the ground instead of sitting in the cockpit. They still need to be built and flown with the same care and respect that you would give a full-scale aircraft.

You would not think of trying to teach yourself to fly a full-scale airplane, and it’s just as unrealistic to try to teach yourself to fly an R/C model aircraft. Yes, it can be done, but life is too short for you to force yourself to repeat the same mistakes the rest of us have already made. **Get a good instructor**, you will learn much faster, spare yourself much grief and repair time, and you will probably still have an intact model when you’re done!

The control inputs a model needs are essentially the same as a full-scale aircraft’s. However, the pilot is not actually in the airplane, and so the orientation skills required are different. **If you are an experienced full-scale aircraft pilot, don’t assume you can fly a model.** There are differences. Once again, **get a good instructor!** You’ll be glad you did.

Check with your local hobby shop for an instructor and for contacts with the local clubs in your area. You can also check with the Academy of Model Aeronautics (“AMA”), the national organization that regulates and promotes model aviation in the USA. If you’re outside the USA, other countries typically have an equivalent organization, all of which ultimately report to the FAI in Paris, France. Find your appropriate national organization, they will be a tremendous source for help and information.

You can reach the AMA through their website at:

www.modelaircraft.org

We strongly recommend joining AMA. In doing so you will be supporting the national organization that stands up for your rights as a modeler. Many of the best flying sites in the USA would not be open for flying, and we would not have the radio frequencies available to us for our radios to use, had it not been through the efforts of the AMA. They have an excellent monthly magazine with all sorts of useful information, and they can help you find local modelers and clubs, as well as flying sites. However, one of the biggest reasons is insurance. **Your AMA membership automatically carries with it supplemental liability insurance coverage**, in case you accidentally cause damage or injury through your modeling activities. All AMA sanctioned clubs and most city parks that officially allow model airplane flying require AMA membership as a condition to being allowed to fly there. In today’s legal environment, flying without insurance coverage is extremely foolish. Join AMA, you’ll be glad you did!

While you’re visiting the AMA website, take the time to read the AMA Safety Code. These are a set of guidelines for safe operation of your model. Their main points are based on the ideas of making sure your model is airworthy, that you fly it in a safe manner, and that you keep it away from things that are expensive and/or fragile (such as people). Although some small modifications may occasionally be needed for specific flying sites, following the spirit of the AMA safety code in all of your flying will save you a lot of repair time and expense, as well as minimizing the odds that you will ever need to use that insurance coverage!

Fly safely, and have fun with your new hobby!