

07 July 2022

C152060

S 9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe S 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 17 May 2022 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about drones. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

In recent years drones have posed increased safety, security and privacy risks for people and organisations both in New Zealand and internationally, including airports and airlines, schools and prisons. Corrections works with other government agencies to ensure we are across the latest developments when it comes to the detection of drones.

Drone sightings around our prisons are rare but when they do happen, they are taken very seriously. Our staff are always vigilant and prison perimeters are actively monitored. Drone sightings are also referred to New Zealand Police when necessary. Incident response plans, which have recently been updated, contain guidance for staff on what action to take in the event of an incident involving a drone, with a focus on proactively reporting any sightings and minimising the risk of people in prison successfully receiving contraband introduced in this way.

The safety of our staff and people in prison is Corrections' top priority, and the introduction of contraband can pose significant safety and security risks in a prison environment. We place considerable emphasis on preventing contraband from entering prisons, apprehending those who attempt to smuggle it, and stamping out opportunities for organised crime.

We have implemented a wide range of screening measures over the past decade to prevent contraband entering prisons. These include:

- Extensive prison perimeter security and a limit to the number of entry points to prisons;
- Increased camera surveillance in prison visit rooms, along the perimeter and at entry points;
- Completing background checks on potential prison visitors;
- Searches of vehicles entering prison property;

- Using scanners and x-ray machines at entry points;
- Banning visitors who attempt to bring contraband into prisons;
- Requiring people in prison to wear closed overalls when in visiting areas;
- Monitoring mail and property for contraband;
- Specialist detector dog teams that patrol prison perimeters, visiting areas and cells, that are trained to detect a range of items including psychoactive substances, other drugs, cell phones, illicitly brewed alcohol and tobacco;
- Identifying and analysing criminal activities in prisons through our Corrections Intelligence team; and,
- The Crimestoppers free telephone service (0800 555 111) that enables information about crime to be provided anonymously.

You requested:

the number of times a drone has reportedly been reported to have flown over a prison.

Could I please get this number for the last 10 years and broken down by year? ie 2012 , 2013 etc

Could I get this as a national figure and for each individual prison? Also in years please?

Have there drones that have been caught/ found in prison property? if so the details of those - when, where, was it carrying anything?

These four questions are answered together below.

Corrections began reporting on incidents involving drones in 2017 and can therefore provide you with information for the last five financial years (inclusive of the current financial year 2021/22). Information prior to 2017 is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA as the information requested does not exist.

The table below shows the total number of incidents involving drones from 2017/18 to 2021/22, as at 20 May 2022. In accordance with Corrections' standard reporting conventions, figures are provided by financial year. These figures represent sightings, possible sightings or suspected drones based on staff hearing the sound of a drone over, around or within prison grounds.

Financial year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 ¹
Total	7	7	21	17	14

In the interests of maintaining safety and security, your request for these figures to be broken down by individual prison sites and your request for further details about any instances where drones were caught including '*when, where, was it carrying anything?*' are refused under section 6(c) of the OIA, as the release of this information would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law including the prevention, investigation and detection of offences. It is considered that the release of specific locations or information about

¹ Numbers for 2021/22 are subject to change until the full year process has been completed.

drones sightings could compromise future security operations and the safety of prisons. Accordingly, it is within the best interest of those in our custody, our staff, and the public to withhold this information.

What happens when a drone is found flying or on prison property - who is it reported to?

Drone sightings are taken very seriously by prison staff and will include a ground and perimeter search to ensure there were no attempts to introduce contraband. As mentioned above, drone sightings are also referred to New Zealand Police when necessary.

What are the consequences of a drone being flown over prison property?

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is the regulatory authority for the use of drones in public areas, including around prisons. The CAA states that a drone cannot be flown in a public space without consent and/or a safety plan. In addition, if a drone was to have introduced contraband into prison, a person would be liable for prosecution under section 141 of the Corrections Act 2004.

Do you have any pictures/video footage of drones over prison property you are able to share?

Corrections has located a small amount of information, including several photographs, within scope of this part of your request. It is possible that further information within scope of this part of your request is held by staff based in prisons across New Zealand. For safety and security reasons we are unable to provide photos and/or video footage of drones over prison property. Corrections considers the release of this information could compromise future operations as it would show the direction drones have approached from. As such this part of your request is refused under section 6(c) of the OIA, as the release of the information would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law including the prevention, investigation and detection of offences.

Please note that this response may be published on Corrections' website. Typically, responses are published quarterly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response with Corrections. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Ngā mihi nui



Ben Clark
Acting National Commissioner