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# HOLYOKE Sun



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## DRONE pilot training course offered

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SPRINGFIELD – In the age of modern technology, many of us are familiar with drones. We use these small, four-propeller, remote-controlled devices for many things, from attaching cameras to them to record family and community events from up above to just flying one around the yard on a quiet afternoon.

But use of these drones isn't limited to just recreational use. Drones are being used more in industry applications, from law enforcement to construction to environmental conservation. At Springfield Technical Community College, students will have an opportunity to begin learning how to pilot a drone for some of these applications as part of an introductory course over three days in March.

"There are so many possible uses for [drones]," said Jon Thies, CEO of SkyOp, LLC, which has partnered to offer the course. "[For public safety,] you can send a drone into a dangerous situation when you want to find someone or in a rescue operation. Instead of having someone in a bucket truck [to inspect a bridge or tower], you can use a drone."

"There's a lot of uses



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A pilot operates a drone. STCC will offer a three day drone pilot training course for industrial uses Saturdays, March 16, 23 and 30 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

where...the drone can be a viable alternative," Thies said.

The "Intro to sUAS" (small unmanned aircraft systems) course will be an 18-hour course that will provide students and aspiring business operators hands-on skills training to fly drones safely, and also prepare them for Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

certification. As well as learning how to fly a quadcopter drone, which they will receive in addition to their course material – students will learn about and understand where they can and cannot fly a drone, and the rules and regulations put out by the FAA regarding drone use for commercial purposes in the coun-

try, referred to as Part 107.

"Three things they learn is how to fly, what they need for Part 107 [license] and intro to uses and applications for commercial uses," Thies said. "Drone operations for commercial [uses] need at least one person with a 107 license. They

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will be going to national airspace, so they need to know about the system they're going to be using."

Also as part of the course, students will receive a flight simulator program. The simulator will include a flight controller and a license to download the simulator program to their computer to practice flying. Thies said that the simulator will give students a flight practice alternative so they can practice on their own, and get used to flying the actual systems.

During the last session of the course, students get to put the skills they learn into practice in a Top Gun Competition. During the competition students will have to fly their drone

through and around a series of obstacles and demonstrate their flying skills. The person who completes the obstacle course with the fastest time will receive "bragging rights" and a hat with a logo.

"When you do the competition, everyone's watching you fly through the course," Thies added about the final challenge. "That translates into what you're probably going to feel when you fly a drone [for commercial uses]."

The three-day course will be held on March 16, March 23 and March 30 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. at STCC. Those interested in taking the course can register online at [www.stcc.edu/drones](http://www.stcc.edu/drones) or call the Workforce Development Center at 413-755-4225.