

DRONES ON THE FLY PRESENTS

Before You Buy A Drone Cleaning Setup

★ Read this first ★

A beginner guide to avoiding expensive mistakes and building the right system from day one.

Welcome to Part 1

What this guide will help you do

This guide is built to help beginners avoid expensive mistakes, understand the business first, and build the right drone cleaning system from day one.

★ Inside this guide ★

1. **What drone cleaning really is**
2. **Why the drone is only one part of the system**
3. **Who this business is for**
4. **The smartest ways to enter the industry**
5. **Good jobs vs bad jobs**
6. **Red flags before you buy**
7. **A simple buy or wait checklist**

★ DRONE OUTLAW TIP

The goal is not to buy fast. The goal is to buy right.

The biggest beginner mistake: “buying the drone first.”

Most people start with the wrong question: **“What drone should I buy?”**

The better question is: **“What business am I building, what jobs am I targeting, and what system do I actually need?”**

Why this matters

- You can buy the wrong setup for your market
- You can run out of money before you can operate
- You can skip training and support
- You can force the drone onto jobs it should never do

The right order: Understand the market. Choose the service. Map the system. Get training. Buy last.

What drone cleaning really is

Drone cleaning is not flying a machine at a building. It is a professional exterior cleaning system that uses a drone as an access tool.

Drone cleaning combines three things

1 • Aviation operation

Flight control, airspace awareness, safety, battery management, and site planning. Commercial flights require an FAA Part 107 remote pilot certificate. [FAA REGULATION](#)

2 • Cleaning operation

Water, pressure, filtration, chemistry, surfaces, rinsing, and final results. The cleaning science is the same whether the water arrives by ladder, lift, or drone.

3 • Risk management

Pedestrian control, overspray control, customer expectations, insurance, and documentation.

Simple truth: The drone gets attention. The system gets results.

The system behind the drone

A real drone cleaning business is built on more than the aircraft. Before you buy, make sure you understand the full system.

★ 7 parts of the system ★

1. **Drone.** The aircraft plus payload. This is the piece everyone shops for first and the piece that matters least on its own.
2. **Ground rig.** The pump, tank, hoses, and power on the ground that feed the drone. The drone cannot outclean a weak ground rig.
3. **Water flow.** How much water reaches the surface, in gallons per minute, and how steady it stays. This decides your real production rate.
4. **Filtration.** What keeps minerals and debris from streaking glass and clogging nozzles. On windows, water quality decides the finish.
5. **Chemistry.** The soaps, degreasers, and rinse agents matched to the surface. Soft wash chemistry does work that pressure cannot.
6. **Crew and safety.** Who flies, who manages the ground, who watches pedestrians. Under FAA rules one pilot flies one aircraft at a time. [14 CFR 107.35](#)
7. **Sales and process.** How jobs are sold, priced, documented, and repeated. This is the part that pays for everything else.

One hard fact before you spend a dollar: Cleaning water arrives through a tether, not on board. Twenty gallons of water weighs about 167 pounds, and the FAA small-drone weight gate is 55 pounds at takeoff. So serious cleaning drones are water-tethered by physics, not by choice. [MODELED](#) [FAA REGULATION](#)

Who this business is for

★ And who should slow down ★

✓ Good fit - if you are

- Already in exterior cleaning
- Comfortable learning technical equipment
- Willing to invest in training
- Serious about safety
- Able to sell commercial services
- Patient enough to build systems first

✗ Not a good fit - if you are

- Looking for easy money
- Skipping cleaning fundamentals
- Hoping the drone will sell jobs for you
- Unwilling to follow safety procedures
- Planning to skip training
- More focused on looking innovative than delivering results

★ DRONE OUTLAW TIP

This industry rewards operators who respect the work.

Five smart ways to enter the industry

You do not have to enter drone cleaning the same way as everyone else. Pick the path that matches your money, skill, and market.

- 1 Add-on service.** Add drone cleaning to an existing window, pressure washing, or exterior cleaning business. You already have customers, insurance, and cleaning knowledge. The drone is a new tool on a working truck.
- 2 Specialist.** Position yourself as the drone access solution for difficult exterior cleaning jobs: high walls, courtyards, rooftops, and facades that scaffolding and lifts handle poorly.
- 3 Partner operator.** Support other cleaning companies on hard access work. They bring the client relationship. You bring the aircraft and the flight skill.
- 4 Sales first.** Validate demand and partner with an established operator before buying big. Sell jobs, rent capacity, and buy only after revenue proves the demand.
- 5 Full system buyer.** Invest in training, support, and the right system from the start. This path costs the most up front and gets you operational the fastest, but only if you have the market to feed it.

What platforms cost. Published prices, September 2026, subject to change. Lucid Bots Sherpa starts at \$45,750; the full package with window payload runs about \$75,000; the Lucid Refresh subscription starts at \$2,500 per month with hardware upgrades every two years. Apellix B2 is \$47,000 and the Blue is \$60,000. ABZ C10 pricing is not published. Platform rates you will see quoted - Lucid 300+ sqft/min, 19-minute flights, up to 4,500 PSI; Apellix up to 4,000 PSI and 8 to 10 GPM; ABZ 2,900 PSI and 3 GPM - are **manufacturer specs**, not field results. No published field-validated sqft/min exists. Do not build your ROI on the rate sheet alone.

★ BEST BEGINNER PATH

For most people, adding drone cleaning to an existing exterior cleaning business is the strongest starting point.

Good jobs vs bad jobs

Not every building should be a drone job.

✓ Good starter jobs

- Large commercial walls with clear access
- Warehouses
- Mid-rise maintenance cleaning
- Simple facades with clear access
- Sites with low pedestrian traffic
- Jobs where traditional backup methods exist

✗ Bad starter jobs

- Tight urban sites with heavy foot traffic
- Complex power line environments
- High wind corridors
- Sensitive surfaces you cannot identify
- Properties with poor overspray control
- Any job beyond your current skill

Know your heights. Tethered cleaning drones operate under a 140 ft above-ground tether cap. Facades above roughly 140 ft force untethered battery operations, which reintroduce battery swap downtime. Know the height of the buildings you plan to clean before you choose a platform.

★ SIMPLE RULE

The fastest way to build trust is to say no when the drone is not the right tool.

Red flags before you buy

If several of these are true, slow down before spending serious money.

- ✗ You do not know your target customer yet
- ✗ You have no training plan
- ✗ You do not understand the full ground system
- ✗ You do not know what jobs you will say no to
- ✗ You are counting on the drone to create demand by itself
- ✗ Buying the drone would leave you with no operating cushion

Slow down if three or more are true. Build the plan first, then buy the setup.

Regulatory reality, plainly stated

Commercial drone cleaning flies under FAA Part 107: visual line of sight, a 400 ft ceiling, a 55-lb takeoff weight, and a remote pilot certificate. Those are the rules today. [FAA REGULATION](#)

One pilot flies one aircraft at a time (14 CFR 107.35). Planning a two-drone operation means two pilots, unless the FAA grants a waiver. Waivers are the path. The FAA does not promise outcomes. Do not start with a two-drone plan.

Part 108 is not a rule yet. The FAA proposed a new rule, Part 108, for beyond-visual-line-of-sight operations. As of September 2026 it is proposed, not final; the FAA hopes for a final rule before the end of 2026, but hope is not a rule. Do not buy on regulatory promises.

Should you buy yet?

★ Quick self-check ★

Check yes only if you can honestly say each one is true.

- ☐ I know who I want to sell to
- ☐ I know what service I want to start with
- ☐ I understand the full system beyond the drone
- ☐ I have a training plan
- ☐ I know what jobs I will avoid at first
- ☐ I have enough budget to operate safely
- ☐ I have a simple sales plan
- ☐ I have support when questions come up

✓ If most of these are yes

You may be ready to start building the right setup.

✗ If several are no

Wait. Build the system first.

Next step

Talk to Drones on the Fly before you spend serious money.
The goal is not to buy fast. The goal is to buy right.

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