FAA 14 CFR Part 450 Upper-Stage Disposal & Launch-License Debris Conditions

Pillar: Disposal Regime | **Basis:** Federal Regulation (14 CFR Part 450) | **Primary Source:** FAA AST / eCFR | **As Of:** Mandatory Cutoff March 9, 2026 (Active Nov 2026)

With FAA's 5-year transition to 14 CFR Part 450 completed on March 9, 2026, all U.S. commercial launch and reentry licenses govern upper-stage orbital debris mitigation, collision avoidance at launch, and stage passivation under unified Part 450 safety rules.

Documented Instrument & Engineering Record

• Unified licensing regime: As of March 9–10, 2026, legacy Parts 415, 417, 431, and 435 were sunsetted into 14 CFR Part 450 for all commercial orbital launches.

• Upper-stage focus: While FCC regulates satellite payloads, FAA Part 450 regulates the launch vehicle and orbital upper stage—requiring collision avoidance (COLA) screening during ascent/deployment and post-deployment stage disposal.

• Reusable vs. expendable stages: WA launch developers (Blue Origin New Glenn, Stoke Space Nova) design reusable or rapidly deorbited upper stages that eliminate long-lived spent rocket bodies in LEO.

• Angle split with Batch 5: Batch 5 Post #1966 documents that Part 450 is LIVE; this brief isolates the upper-stage disposal and COLA obligations inside Part 450.

FAA Part 450 vs. FCC Part 25 Jurisdiction Split

Hardware Element	Governing Agency	Primary Regulation
Launch Vehicle & Upper Stage	FAA (AST)	14 CFR Part 450
Payload RF & Satellite Disposal	FCC (Space Bureau)	47 CFR Part 25 (§ 25.283)
Remote-Sensing Payload Data	NOAA (CRSRA)	15 CFR Part 960
NASA-Contracted Payloads	NASA SMA	NASA-STD-8719.14C (Contract)

Mission Designer, Compliance Lead & Founder Takeaways

• Spent rocket bodies represent a disproportionate share of total orbital mass (>17,000 tonnes total tracked mass per ESA 2026 Report).

• WA launch teams operating out of Florida/Vandenberg (Blue Origin, Stoke Space) still engineer upper-stage passivation valves and reentry guidance in Kent and Redmond.

• Rideshare payload integrators must verify that the launch provider's Part 450 license covers deployment separation and COLA windows.

Cross-Cluster Links & Primary Sources

• **Batch 5 Verdict: FAA Part 450 Licensing (LIVE):** https://bcesg.org/wa-space-rule-faa-part-450-launch-live/

• **No Orbital Launch Range in Washington:** https://bcesg.org/wa-space-fight-no-orbital-launch-range-physics/

• **Stoke Space (Kent) Census Profile:** https://bcesg.org/stoke-space-washington-space-cluster-profile/

• **eCFR: 14 CFR Part 450 (Launch and Reentry License Requirements):** https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-14/chapter-III/subchapter-C/part-450

• **ESA Space Debris Office:** https://www.esa.int/about-us/directorates/operations/space-safety/space-debris

Provenance Note: Verified against 14 CFR Part 450 (eCFR) and Batch 5 #1966 transition dates as of 2026-11-16.