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Aviation & Aerospace: The Launch of Commercial Drones

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The only thing outpacing the Federal Aviation Administration's rapid development of guidelines and regulations governing unmanned aircraft systems (also known as drones) is the list of industries seeking to use those systems for commercial purposes. In recent months, the FAA has approved a small but growing number of petitions seeking authorization to operate small UAS (55 lbs. and less) for commercial purposes ranging from agriculture to filmmaking to flare stack inspection. The petitions were filed pursuant to Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, which provides a procedure for expedited authorization for commercial operations using small UAS. The companies that filed the successful petitions are currently conducting the only legal commercial UAS operations in U.S. airspace.

As drone technology continues to disrupt new industries, the importance of Section 333 petitions as the sole avenue for conducting commercial operations has become increasingly clear. Though the FAA has worked with NASA and Congress to develop a comprehensive set of regulations governing commercial UAS operations, internal agency audit reports have revealed that the regulations are not expected to be finalized until 2016 or later. Until then, Section 333 will remain the holy grail for UAS operators who plan to conduct commercial operations in the foreseeable future.

For more information about the latest legal developments on commercial use of drones, please click [here](#) to read the Q4 2014 edition of Buchalter Nemer's Aviation & Aerospace and Surface Transportation Quarterly Newsletter.



Paul Fraidenburgh focuses his practice on representing technology companies in regulatory affairs and litigation. As a member of the Aviation & Aerospace Practice Group, Mr. Fraidenburgh has gained a national reputation for his representation of clients in the unmanned aircraft systems industry. The Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, and several other publications have quoted Mr. Fraidenburgh on the topic of unmanned aircraft systems, and his clients are among the most cutting-edge filmmakers and aviation companies in the world. He can be reached at 949.224.6247 or pfraidenburgh@buchalter.com.