

ARTICLE

FAA Streamlines Airspace Authorizations for Section 333 Exemption Holders

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Today, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced the establishment of a new policy intended to streamline the Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) process for certain commercial Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) operators. The FAA will grant a “blanket” COA for flights at or below 200 feet to any UAS operator with a Section 333 exemption for aircraft that:

- Weigh less than 55 pounds,
- Operate during daytime Visual Flight Rules conditions,
- Operate within visual line of sight of the pilot, and
- Stay certain distances away from airports or heliports.

The FAA’s previous COA process required Section 333 exemption holders to apply for and receive a COA for a particular block of airspace, a process which took up to 60 days. In contrast, this blanket COA will allow flights anywhere in the country except restricted airspace and areas where the FAA prohibits UAS operations.

Section 333 exemptions permit certain UAS users to perform commercial operations in low-risk environments. The FAA has granted over 50 Section 333 petitions for exemption to date.

Practice Areas

Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS)