

FAA Moves to Summary Grant Process for UAS Petitions

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The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has instituted a new "summary grant" process to more expeditiously grant petitions to conduct commercial operations of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) pursuant to Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act. The summary grant process has enabled the agency to grant 69 exemption petitions between April 3 and April 9, 2015, more than doubling the number of grants to date and bringing the total to 137.

Under the abbreviated process, the FAA will still consider exemption petitions on a case by case basis, but will issue a summary grant without undertaking a detailed analysis or posting the petition in the Federal Register for public comment where the agency determines that "it has already granted a previous exemption similar to the new request." The FAA has indicated that most petitions proposing operations relating to either film and television production or aerial data collection will be handled using the summary process. The agency's press release about summary grants and other updates to the exemption process-including its recent decision to permit UAS operations by pilots with only a recreational or sport pilot certificate and no third class medical certificate-is available here.

The FAA's new use of summary grants will greatly expedite the exemption process for commercial UAS operators. As the FAA has already granted petitions for commercial uses of UAS relating to areas such as insurance, closed set filming, live sporting events, and utility and infrastructure inspection, the summary process will better position prospective UAS operators across industries to achieve the necessary FAA approval to conduct operations.

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Practice Areas

Telecom, Media & Technology
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Wiley Rein has been active in helping entities apply for and obtain Section 333 exemption grants, and has played a key advisory role in helping entities get their UAS off the ground.