

CLIENT ALERT

ISO Releases First Global Drone Standard

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On November 28, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) released the first ever draft global standard for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) operations. The standard, titled *Draft International Standard for Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations*, represents an important step in standardizing UAS operations around the world. Although ISO will publish the standard for global adoption starting in 2019, compliance is not mandatory. The standard is nevertheless important because the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and sister agencies worldwide will likely use it as a foundation for future rulemaking. Operators, service providers, and manufacturers should thus strongly consider early adoption of the standard in preparing for forthcoming regulation.

The draft, [ISO 21384-3](#), is the first in a four-part series of UAS standards that ISO is currently developing. The next three draft standards are to address general specifications, manufacturing, and unmanned traffic management. This maiden draft addresses operational procedures, making it particularly relevant to anyone who operates UAS for commercial purposes. The draft standard covers safety, autonomous operations, data protection, and overall operational etiquette.

The standard, not surprisingly, first directs UAS operators to follow the existing statutes and regulations of the operators' jurisdictions. But it also provides guidance for use in the absence of specific regulations. For instance, for commercial operators in the United States flying under the FAA's [Small UAS Rule \(Part 107\)](#), the standard includes recommendations for properly logging flights, implementing a safety management system, employing training and maintenance standards, and updating UAS hardware and software. Many commercial UAS operators agree that those subjects are valuable and important for the continued development of the UAS industry, but the FAA has not yet addressed them in a formal rulemaking. The ISO draft standard may prompt reconsideration of the value of (or need for) formal rules in these areas and others it covers.

The ISO has invited drone professionals, academics, businesses, and the general public to submit comments on the draft standard. Those comments are due by January 21, 2019. Given the likelihood that the draft standard will influence upcoming FAA rules, among others, businesses that utilize UAS technology would be well-advised to review the draft standard and consider what comments they might contribute. Even businesses that do not yet employ UAS technology would be well served to focus, since new applications for UAS are rapidly emerging in a host of industries, including in the agricultural, maritime, insurance, construction, and energy sectors.

Safe drone implementation is transforming businesses and municipalities, resulting in significant cost savings, improved workplace safety, and more reliable work product. A standards-led adoption of drone technology promises to allow commercial operators to integrate drone operations into their business models safely and confidently.

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