Unmanned Vehicle Systems

Unmanned vehicle systems (UVS) are poised to revolutionize modern life and commerce, and Perkins Coie is part of that revolution. We handle complex matters and business issues for companies designing, building and using unmanned aircraft and other unmanned vehicles.

Perkins Coie advises, counsels and represents UVS industry clients, from startup manufacturers of unmanned vehicles to major corporations expanding into the UVS industry, in such areas as:

- Regulatory Compliance
- Intellectual Property Protection and Enforcement
- Licensing and Monetization
- Corporate Governance
- Privacy and Security
- Risk Management
- Product Liability and Personal Injury
- Litigation
- Government Relations
- Supply Chain Issues
- Insurance Recovery

FOCUSED ON INNOVATION, EXPERIENCED WORKING WITH STARTUPS

Technological innovations are the lifeblood of the UVS industry, and Perkins Coie advises corporations, inventors, entrepreneurs and innovators on intellectual property law relevant to the protection of their vital IP assets.

Startups and emerging companies form a large portion of the UVS industry. We provide newly established businesses with practical, strategic advice on overcoming challenges at all stages of growth, from incorporation to monetization and exit. Perkins Coie attorneys have handled thousands of venture financings and have significant experience with private debt and equity financing transactions for emerging company clients.

Perkins Coie provides UVS clients with guidance on the full range of legal issues they face in:

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

UVS companies confront a rapidly changing regulatory environment. Perkins Coie’s experience helps companies navigate regulations promulgated by the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, as well as state and local authorities. We also have experience preparing Section 333 exemption petitions for commercial UVS operations.

PATENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

We are known for the technical background of our intellectual property law attorneys. Many of our UVS team members have backgrounds in computer science, electronics, aerospace and aeronautical and astronautical engineering. Several of our attorneys have examined patent applications in the field of aeronautics and astronautics at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and some are licensed pilots as well.
To support the patent prosecution and litigation needs of our clients, we have more than 100 patent litigators who collaborate with our patent prosecution team. We advocate for clients through the entire litigation process—from preliminary injunction hearings, Markman hearings and ITC litigation to jury and bench trials nationwide. Our attorneys have served as first-chair trial leads and litigated patent claims in over 50 jurisdictions throughout the United States.

**LICENSING AND MONETIZATION**

Commercialization of technology is a major focus for our more than 50 IP licensing attorneys. We concentrate on structuring, negotiating and documenting a wide variety of arrangements to acquire, develop, protect and distribute technologies, both domestically and internationally.

**PRIVACY COMPLIANCE**

With the advent of drones and the UVS industry comes a rise in privacy-related concerns. To help clients navigate these emerging challenges, Perkins Coie has assembled an interdisciplinary privacy and security team, which includes litigators, transactional attorneys and public policy and regulatory lawyers.

We have substantial experience in handling privacy litigation, including defending class action lawsuits and government enforcement actions. We also have developed privacy and security policies, implemented fair information practices and executed privacy and security audits.

**PRODUCT LIABILITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

As UVS companies innovate technologies and integrate them into operations, they must also address the risks of personal injury lawsuits. Perkins Coie provides product liability counseling to help clients minimize risk. We offer customized workshops that provide employee education. We also counsel clients on risk analysis and provide guidance on the development of product warnings. If personal injury claims arise, we represent clients in government investigations and vigorously defend them in lawsuits.

Our vast product liability experience includes a strong focus on aviation. Our aviation and aerospace group, which has been ranked in Band 1 by *Chambers USA* in aviation litigation since 2009, represents leading aerospace and aviation companies, such as The Boeing Company and Honeywell Aerospace, in high-profile, high-stakes matters, including major airline disasters and satellite losses.

**INSURANCE RECOVERY**

Attorneys in our nationally recognized Insurance Recovery practice advise clients on all kinds of insurance, including product and general liability, directors and officers, property and business interruption, employment practices and crime coverage. We advise policyholders how to structure and place insurance for current and emerging risks; to make claims and enforce their insurance coverage and pursue disputed claims to verdict or an award in arbitration. We have succeeded in recovering billions of dollars in insurance recoveries for our clients.

As governmental and commercial applications of unmanned aerial vehicles and other UVS continue their revolutionary trajectory, Perkins Coie commits itself to the growth and protection of the companies and people in the industry. We monitor technological and regulatory developments and participate in meetings and forums focused on the evolving technology and expanding marketplace for unmanned vehicle systems.

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**Soaring Into The Future - Commercial UAVs And How To Be Legal**

Are you using your drone legally? Rules governing the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) industry are evolving, making it easy to unintentionally be on the wrong side of the law. In this video, Perkins Coie highlights some of the regulations and permits in effect once your drone crosses from personal use to commercial. What else to consider? Privacy, intellectual property, product liability insurance and beyond. Take a look at our drone-shot video to learn more.

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**CONTACT US**

The Unmanned Vehicle Systems team works with numerous practices and industries. For more information about a specific area of focus, please contact the attorneys listed below.
AREAS OF FOCUS

- Regulatory Compliance
  Contact: Brendan Murphy

- Patent and Intellectual Property Protection
  Contacts: John Wechkin

- Licensing and Monetization
  Contact: John Wechkin

- Privacy Compliance
  Contacts: John Roche and Jim McCullagh

- Product Liability and Risk Management
  Contacts: Brendan Murphy and Dan Ridlon

- Emerging Companies
  Contact: Buddy Arnheim

INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED TEAM COMMITTED TO THE UVS INDUSTRY

We were one of the first firms to form an interdisciplinary team of attorneys to provide strategic guidance for companies designing, building and using unmanned aircraft and other unmanned vehicles. As strategic members of the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), the world's largest nonprofit organization devoted exclusively to advancing the unmanned systems and robotics community, we stand committed in fostering innovation and continuing to help the industry establish technical, safety, application and policy standards. Our attorneys are featured at industry events such as the International Aviation Women’s Association (IAWA), Commercial UAV and AVUSI’s Xponential. Our work on behalf of UVS clients spans the spectrum from startup manufacturers of unmanned vehicles to major corporations expanding into the UVS industry. As governmental and commercial applications of UVS continue their revolutionary trajectory, we are at the forefront of the industry, working with clients as they move into more consumer-facing models of devices.

Perkins Coie represents emerging companies and large public technology companies across diverse industry sectors, including aerospace, robotics, semiconductors, software and electronics. We are internationally recognized in many of the areas where we represent our UVS industry clients. Our practice recognitions include:

- Named a “Leader” among tech-savvy firms by BTI Brand Elite (2016)
- Named one of the “4 Top Law Firms in Silicon Valley” according to tech CEOs, as reported by *Inc. Magazine* (June 2016)
- Named the Go-To BigLaw Firm for Silicon Valley for Entrepreneurs (2017)

EXPERIENCE

THE BOEING COMPANY
Represented Boeing, the world’s largest aerospace company and leading manufacturer of commercial jetliners, defense, space and security systems, and service provider of aftermarket support, in its acquisition of Aurora Flight Sciences, a world-class innovator, developer and manufacturer of advanced aerospace platforms and autonomous systems.

SKYWARD
Represented Skyward, the leading operations management solution for commercial drone businesses, in its acquisition by Verizon Communications Inc., provider of communications and entertainment services over mobile broadband. Skyward brings drone operations management to the Verizon IoT portfolio, simplifying drone operations and management for organizations of any size.

ELBIT SYSTEMS
Represent international defense contractor in bankruptcy case of sole source supplier of components for the contractor’s unmanned aerial vehicles, including protecting rights as licensee, obtaining return of property, impact of asset sale and creditor issues.

TITAN AEROSPACE
Provide corporate and intellectual property representation and counseling for the company, including patent prosecution and counseling in the areas of aerodynamics, solar cells and manufacturing.

THE BOEING COMPANY
Represent The Boeing Company in all areas of intellectual property protection and several other areas of law relating to Boeing’s technology, including FAA and other regulatory compliance, as well as product liability. We provide patent preparation, prosecution and opinion work for all areas of Boeing technology, including composite structures design and manufacturing, guidance systems,
propulsion, electrical power generation and management, and fuel systems.

INSITU, INC.
Provide patent portfolio planning, development and counseling, including patent preparation, prosecution, evaluation, analysis and opinion work for Insitu, the leading manufacturer of unmanned aircraft systems in the fields of aerodynamics, propulsion, avionics and software.

COMPLIANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT COUNSEL TO FORTUNE 100 MANUFACTURER
Advise Fortune 100 manufacturer and seller of high-tech consumer products on regulatory compliance (e.g., CPSC), warranties, contractual risk management and product liability prevention.

NEWS
03.11.2019
Perkins Coie Attorneys Quoted in Commercial UAV News - The Past as Prologue: What Can the History of Mobile Networks Tell Us About the Future of UAS?
General News
Commercial UAV News
Dave St. John-Larkin and Daniel Ridlon were quoted in the Commercial UAV News article, "The Past as Prologue: What Can the History of Mobile Networks Tell Us About the Future of UAS?" regarding the how rapid technological innovation of the UAV space.

02.06.2019
Bill Malley Quoted in Robotics Business Review - Liability Concerns, Regulation Authority Top Obstacles for Self-Driving Growth, Survey Says
General News
Robotics Business Review
Bill Malley was quoted in the Robotics Business Review article, "Liability Concerns, Regulation Authority Top Obstacles for Self-Driving Growth, Survey Says," regarding the updating of existing requirements when new technology emerges.

12.06.2017
Perkins Coie Represents Boeing in Acquisition of Aurora Flight Sciences
Press Releases
Perkins Coie represented Boeing, the world's largest aerospace company and leading manufacturer of commercial jetliners, defense, space and security systems, and service provider of aftermarket support, in its acquisition of Aurora Flight Sciences, a world-class innovator, developer and manufacturer of advanced aerospace platforms and autonomous systems.

PUBLICATIONS
02.14.2019
FAA Updates Small UAS Rules
Updates
The FAA published proposed rules on the Operation of Small Unmanned Aircraft Over People on February 13, 2019.

10.16.2018
USDOT Issues Updated Policy on Automated Vehicles, Signaling Rulemakings to Come
Updates
The United States Department of Transportation recently released its latest policy statement on automated vehicle technologies, Automated Driving Systems 3.0: Preparing for the Future of Transportation.

10.04.2018
Congress Passes FAA Reauthorization Bill That Opens Door for Significant Changes to UAS Regulations
Updates
On October 3, 2018, the Senate passed a bipartisan bill that will reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for five years. The bill, which is referred to as the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 (H.R. 302), was previously passed by the House of Representatives.

01.23.2018
USDOT Seeks Comment on Removing Regulatory Barriers to Autonomous Vehicles
Updates
Last week, three U.S. Department of Transportation agencies issued requests for comment on ways to update federal regulations and policies to allow for the safe testing and deployment of autonomous vehicles.

01.17.2018
Washington Could Lead on Autonomous Maritime Technologies
Articles
Seattle Times
As Washington thinks about its maritime future, it should think critically about how new technologies will change the industry.

11.10.2017

FAA Details Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Pilot Program

Updates
The FAA published a notice on the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Pilot Program this week. The program, initiated by a Presidential Memorandum, is designed to accelerate safe UAS integration through public-private sector partnerships.

PRESENTATIONS

Unmanned Vehicle Systems Event Calendar
Speaking Engagements
Join Perkins Coie at one of the unmanned vehicle conferences we’ll be attending!

05.02.2019

Regulatory Round-Up: New Developments in Federal, State, and Local Regulation of AVs
Speaking Engagements
Opening the Road to Automated Vehicles
Panelist
Xponential / Chicago, IL

05.01.2019

Startup Showdown
Speaking Engagements
Panelist
Xponential / Chicago, IL

03.14.2019

Young Professionals in Energy Autonomous Vehicles Event
Speaking Engagements
Perkins Coie / San Francisco, CA

10.19.2018

Who Regulates Automated Vehicles? A Brief Tour of the Shifting Regulatory Landscape
Speaking Engagements
Breakfast Briefing
Cleantech San Diego / San Diego, CA

07.10.2018

The Emerging Role of State and Local Governments in Regulating Autonomous Vehicles
Speaking Engagements
AUVSI Automated Vehicles Symposium, Enterprise Solutions Series / San Francisco, CA

CONTACTS

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RELATED SERVICES

PRACTICES
- Aviation & Transportation
- Emerging Companies & Venture Capital Law
- Insurance Recovery Law
- Patent Prosecution & Portfolio Counseling
- Patent Litigation
- Privacy & Security Law
- Product Liability Law
- Tech Amicus

INDUSTRIES
- Autonomous Vehicle Systems
- New Space

NEWS & INSIGHTS

CLIENT UPDATE

FAA Updates Small UAS Rules
The FAA published proposed rules on the Operation of Small Unmanned Aircraft Over People on February 13, 2019.

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USDOT Issues Updated Policy on Automated Vehicles, Signaling Rulemakings to Come

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Congress Passes FAA Reauthorization Bill That Opens Door for Significant Changes to UAS Regulations
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