

ALERTS

Confusion Abounds On Potential LAANC Expiration

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Business leaders and investors in the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) industry have been talking nonstop about how the Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAANC) is allegedly expiring. Contrary to this chatter, no such expiration is expected to take place. Rather, it is more likely that there may be some confusion between LAANC and the Federal Aviation Administration Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, which will expire on Sept. 30, 2018, unless Congress acts to extend it. Given recent activity in Congress, agency operations are expected to continue.

At the time of its enactment, the Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 was the first long-term reauthorization of the FAA since 2007, and subsequently has been extended on a short-term basis since it faced expiration in 2016. This year, however, rather than simply enacting another short-term extension, it is expected that Congress will pass the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018, or HR 302, by the Sept. 30 deadline. This enactment will keep the FAA authorized for another five years, through 2023. Most significantly, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 includes provisions purposed towards integrating UAVs into the national airspace.

While those within the UAV industry are advised to stay abreast of the expected enactment of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018, interested parties can take ease in knowing that none of this means that LAANC is facing expiration. Through mobile requests processed at a near-real time pace, LAANC innovatively provides UAV users authorization to access controlled airspace near airports below approved altitudes. Generally, this approved altitude is 400 feet or lower. LAANC is still a relatively new program and just recently finished completely its roll-out to all six regional zones, with its latest expansion into the Central North region on Sept. 13, 2018.

In general, LAANC has been heralded as a major advancement and welcomed approach by commercial UAV users to quickly gain access to airspace, which previously required a considerably longer and more administratively burdensome timeframe. Further information on LAANC is available online at https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs_partnerships/uas_data_exchange/.

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