COMMERCIAL
UAV EXPO

SEPT. 1-3, 2026

CAESARS FORUM / LAS VEGAS

2026
Post Show Report

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PROVEN TECHNOLOGY. PRACTICAL INSIGHTS. POWERFUL CONNECTIONS.

PRESENTED BY:
COMMERCIAL UAV NEWS

EVENT PARTNERS:
DRONERESPONDERS
pilotinstitute

Produced by diversified

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INTRODUCTION

Commercial UAV Expo 2026 marked the 12th annual gathering of the commercial drone community, and the largest in the event's history. Since our launch in 2015, Commercial UAV Expo and Commercial UAV News have served as the place where the industry connects, learns, and does business. This year, 3,800 verified professionals from all 50 U.S. states and 65 countries, alongside 250 exhibiting companies, came together at Caesars Forum in Las Vegas, September 1-3.

They arrived at a pivotal moment. Part 108, the FCC Covered List, and Section 232 tariffs on drones and related components are reshaping how operators buy, build, and fly, and attendees came looking for clarity and to connect with peers working through the same decisions. Regulators were part of the program as well. FAA officials led sessions on all three days, EASA leaders headlined a dedicated panel on drone rules across Europe, and the closing keynote, "Two Skies, One Conversation," brought both agencies to the same stage for a candid comparison of transatlantic BVLOS approaches.

The conference program, built around the theme Actionable Insights, featured more than 140 speakers across over 50 sessions, covering everything from BVLOS implementation and AI to workforce development and vertical case studies. Public safety and pilot education programming also grew. The DRONERESPONDERS Public Safety Summit, presented by AIRT, delivered two days of content for first responders, and the new DRONERESPONDERS Program Management Course sold out. The Pilot Hub, presented by Pilot Institute, returned alongside the Indoor Airspace Demonstration Area and the Level Up Lounge, giving attendees hands-on ways to build their flying and business skills. Roundtable discussions continued to expand, giving peers room to compare notes on what is working in the field.

Thank you for being part of a landmark year. The industry is evolving too quickly for the conversation to end here, so subscribe to Commercial UAV News and save the date to join us at Caesars Forum, September 7-9, 2027.



Adrianne Madden
Event Director



Matt Collins
Content Manager

SHOW FACTS & FIGURES

> The commercial drone sector is approaching market acceptance and Commercial UAV Expo was able to highlight the industry trends, the major companies contributing to its growth, inclusion of pilot training and suggestions for improvement, and a coming together of the minds to increase the productivity UAVs bring to the commercial market. This is a must attend event for anyone or company that is either invested in this market or entertaining the prospect of participating/engaging in this market in the future."

– Rod Dayrit, Zapi Group



ATTENDEE STATS

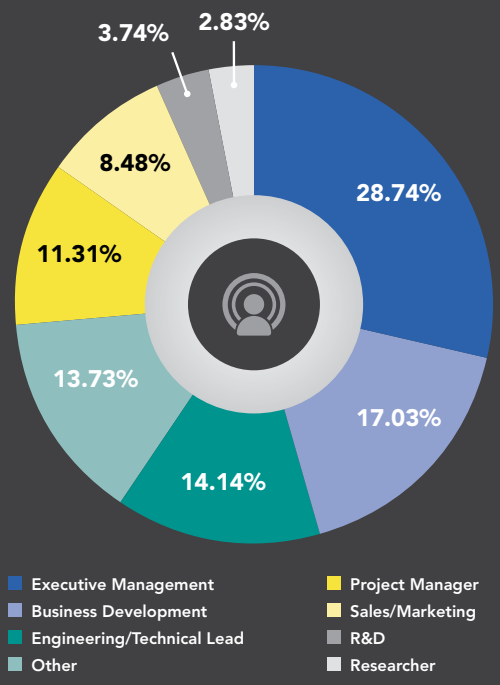
SATISFACTION

69%
say attending Commercial UAV Expo is important to their business

85%
were satisfied with the event overall

82%
were satisfied with the conference program

2026 ATTENDEE RESPONSIBILITIES



ATTENDEE PURCHASING AUTHORITY

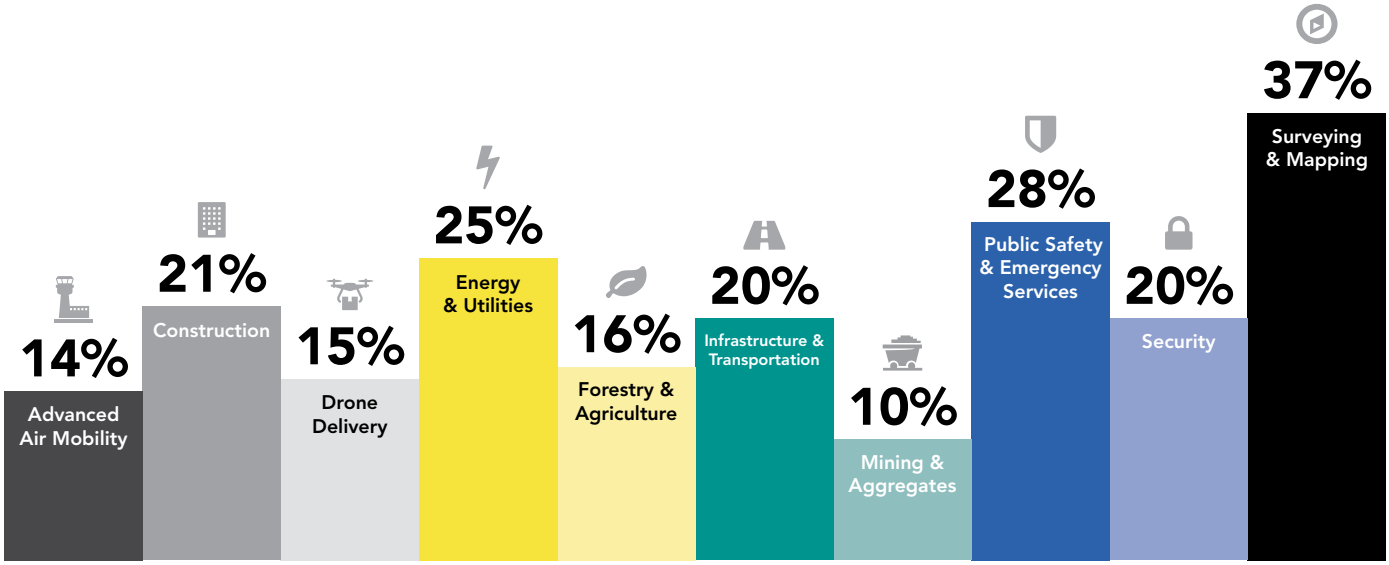
92%
are involved in or influence the purchasing decisions

> This event brought together the best UAV players across Industries on a single platform. It was an excellent opportunity for a UAV service provider to understand UAV tech implementation into Industrial space."
>
> – Rahul Uniyal,
> Uniinfra Solutions Pvt Ltd



ATTENDEE STATS

2026 INDUSTRY BREAKDOWN



Other industries include: Aerospace, Automation, Education, Government, Inspection, Manufacturing, Photography & Videography, and Retail

Percentages reflect attendees' selections of multiple industries during registration.

SAMPLE JOB TITLES

AVIATION SAFETY INSPECTOR/LEAD/ MANAGER

BUSINESS ADVISOR/CONSULTANT

DATA ANALYST/SCIENTIST/SPECIALIST/ PROCESSOR

DRONE/UAS ANALYST/LEAD/OPERATOR/ SUPERVISOR/SPECIALIST

FIREFIGHTER/MARSHAL/CAPTAIN/CHIEF

FORESTER/INVENTORY

FORESTER GEOLOGIST/ARCHAEOLOGIST/ HYDROGEOLOGIST/ECOLOGIST/

GEOPHYSICIST

GEOSPATIAL ANALYST/TECHNICIAN/ SCIENTIST/SPECIALIST/LEAD

GIS (MANAGER, SCIENTIST, ANALYST, SPECIALIST, TECHNICIAN)

LINEMAN SUPERVISOR

PARTNER (MANAGING/FOUNDER/ ASSOCIATE)

PHOTOGRAMMETRIST

PIPING DESIGN LEAD

POLICE CAPTAIN/LIEUTENANT/ SERGEANT/ DETECTIVE

PRECISION AGRICULTURE SPECIALIST

PRESS/MEDIA/EDITOR/WRITER

REMOTE SENSING ANALYST/DIRECTOR/ LEAD/TECHNICIAN/OPERATOR

RESEARCHER (PRINCIPAL/CHIEF/DIRECTOR)

RPIC

SERVICE PROVIDER

SOLUTION ARCHITECT/ENGINEER/ SOFTWARE DEVELOPER

SUPERINTENDENT ELECTRIC

TECHNOLOGY OFFICER/SPECIALIST/ STRATEGIST/ANALYST

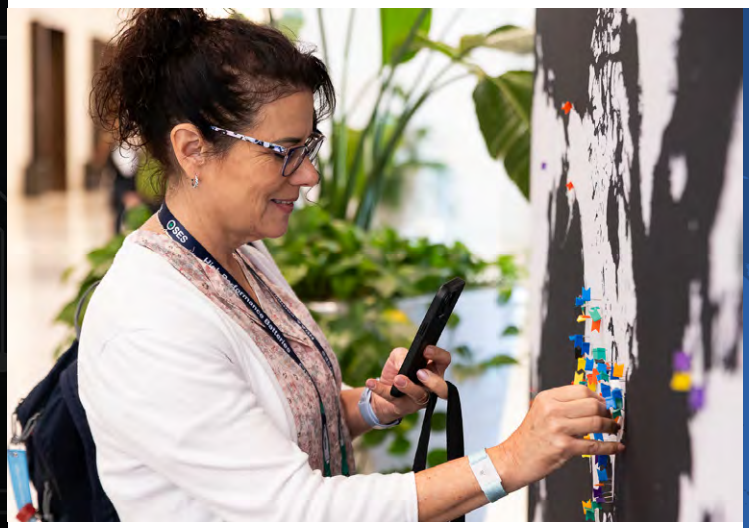
TOWER SITES INSPECTOR TRADE COMMISSIONER/INVESTMENT/ECONOMIST

ATTENDEE STATS

GLOBAL REACH



In 2026, 3,800 industry professionals attended from 65 countries.







> "Commercial UAV Expo proved to be a highly valuable experience, offering a chance to see first hand the latest drone technologies and aircraft models that are rarely encountered in Japan. The use of drones is expanding across various industries and sectors in Japan."
>
> – YOSHIYUKI ODA

EXHIBITOR STATS

SATISFACTION

88%
of Exhibitors were satisfied with Commercial UAV Expo

77%
say exhibiting at Commercial UAV Expo is important for their business

90%
met their exhibiting objectives

88%
of exhibitors plan to exhibit again

250
Companies
exhibited at Commercial UAV Expo



Interested in exhibiting?

CLICK HERE



> Commercial UAV Expo was our first time exhibiting at the Startup Pavilion, and it turned out to be a game changer for us. The level of interest in our technology was incredible, and we walked away with strong leads and real partnership opportunities."
>
> – Virind Gujral, EV Bots Inc.

EXHIBITOR STATS

250 COMPANIES



EXHIBITOR STATS



> "Commercial UAV brings together a lot of people from different commercial aspects of the UAV marketplace, including mapping drones, survey drones, ag spray, and security drones as first responders. And these are all important markets for us to leverage our technology in."
>
> – Mike Horton, HYFIX Spatial Intelligence

EXHIBITOR STATS

EXHIBITOR LIST

3Dsurvey
AA Portable Power Corp dba batteryspace.com
ACSL, Inc.
Advantage+ Financing
AERO AI INC.
Aero Systems West
Aerora North America, Inc.
Aerovix Technologies
Airborne Public Safety Association
AirData UAV, Inc
Aiu Limited
Almo Pro AV
Amazon Prime Air
American Tower
Amigo Technology, LLC
Amprius Technologies
ANELLO Photonics | GPS-Denied Navigation
Anyang Hawk Aviation Technology Co., Ltd.
ArborPro, Inc
Arcsky
ASSURE - Mississippi State University
ATN Aerospace & Defense
AxEnd
Badland Batteries
BaseCam Electronics
Black River Systems Company
Blue Nose Aerial Imaging
Blue Skies Drones
BRINC
CANLAB Co., Ltd.
Carahsoft
Carlson Software
CENTUM
CHC Navigation
Colorado Drone Chargers
Consumer Priority Service
Croix International, LLC.
Datumate
DelMar Aerospace Corp
DeTect Inc.
Dispatcher
DJI
Drone Nerds Inc
Drone Rescue Systems
DroneClear by Wanda Analytics
DroneSpotter, Inc
DroneTrax
Durabook Americas, Inc.
EagleNXT
ECHODYNE
Edgesource Corporation
EFT Electronic Technology Co. Ltd.
EGI Battery
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
ENOUGH BATTERY
Enovix Corporation
EnrichPower Battery
EV Bots Inc.
Falconguard UAV
Federal Aviation Administration
First Texas Products Electronics MFG
Flyability
Flyby Robotics
FlyGuys, Inc.
FlyingBasket
FlytBase
Formlabs Inc.
Frontier Precision Unmanned
Fullerton Drone Lab at Fullerton College
Future Electronics Inc
GeoCue Group
Global Aerospace, Inc.
Golden Feather
Goodwinds Composites
Granite Telecommunications LLC
Greene Rubber Company
Grepow Inc DBA Tattu battery
Harris Aerial
Hextronics
HEREWIN.
HITEC Commercial Solutions
HOBBYWING
Hollywood Drones/DroneTV
Horizon Precision Systems, LLC
Hoverfly Technologies, Inc.
HP Inc.
HYFIX
Hylio Inc.
Impac Systems Engineering
Inertial Labs, a VIAVI Solutions Company
Infinite Electronics
Infraspection Institute
Inside Unmanned Systems
Inspired Flight Technologies, Inc.
i-SOLIDS
Iwa Robotics Inc.
Japan Drone / JUIDA
Jiangsu Reliance Energy Tech. Co., Ltd.
Jiangsu Sunpower Co., LTD.
Jiangxi Zhenghui New Energy
JRK Vision
Juniper Systems
K. K. Nag Private Limited
KINETIC CONSULTING
Korea Pavilion (MOLIT&KIAST)
Kuiper Lab
KULR Technology
Lantronix
Lefixea Inc.
Leica Geosystems Inc.
LG
LIDARUSA
LightWare Lidar Inc.
LP360
Lumenier
LumiDB
Lyten
M5D
MAD Components Inc
MANETmesh Technologies Munich GmbH
Markforged
Maverick by Exergy
MaxAmps Lithium Batteries
Maxtena, Inc.
McGill and Partners
Mobility One Inc
Motorola Solutions
Nanjing Kuailun Intelligent Technology Co., Ltd
Narma Inc
NEXTCHIP
NINANO
NMB Technologies Corporation, A MinebeaMitsumi Company
Nolvis
Nova
NSA Cybersecurity Collaboration
NTI Systems Inc
NW Blue/CubePilot
Ouster
Pak-Rite LTD Michigan
Parallel Flight Technologies
Pelican Wire
Pergam Technical Systems
Phoenix Group
Phoenix LiDAR Systems
Pierce Aerospace
Piezo Motor Company LLC
Pilot Institute
PIXELPLUS Co.,Ltd
Point One Navigation
Pointerra
Ponderosa.ai
Proto Labs
Quantum Drones Corporation
RACEPOW
RangeMark | by Sodyo
Real Time Robotics
Re: Building Manufacturing
Red Cat Holdings
RIEGL USA Inc.
RIIS LLC
Rincell Corporation
Robin Radar Systems
Robinson Unmanned
ROCK robotic
Roof Hawk Drones
Rosefinch Technology Tethered Solution
Royal Case Company, INC.
RPX Technologies, INC
San Diego State University
Scopito
Seek Thermal
Seiler GeoDrones
Sense Aeronautics
SensorOps
Sentera
SES AI
SFS Group USA, Inc.
Shenzhen Feikong Technology Co., Ltd
Sila Nanotechnologies
SiMa.ai
SimActive
SINCLAIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Sixdof Space
SKB and Nanuk
Skyfront Corp.
Skygauge Robotics
Skyline Nav AI - Pathfinder Autonomous Navigation
SkySafe
Smatii
Sonoran Desert Institute
Sony Electronics
SPARD NEW ENERGY CO., LTD
Specialty Coating Systems
Spexi
Starman
Stratum Sentinel
sUAS Ops
Sunbelt Rentals
Sundance Media Group
Sunhillo Corporation
SuNPe Prototype
Superwake
SYNEREX Inc.
Tactical Signal Solutions, LLC / PerimeterScope
Tausync Technology Inc.
TEAL Communications, Inc.
Teledyne Optech
Tenpower Cell
TENSAR – AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS
Teradek
Terrasolid Lt
The Drone Forum
The Drone Strategist
Theta Informatics
Think Power Solutions
ThinkOrbital
Titan Batteries
Trydan Tech
TUALCOM USA LLC
Tulip Tech
UAS Sentry
UAV Coach
UFDS INC
University Of Maryland
Upgrade Energy
USI - Unmanned Safety Institute
UtopiaCompression Corporation
Vaanfly
Vantanix
Venom Power
Vertiq
Vigilant Sky Technologies
Virtual Surveyor nv
Vololand
Volyon
VT Insurance Agency LLC
Vulcan Metals Specialty Products
Warren County Community College
Wave Central
WEFLO
Whiteout Solutions, LLC
Women and Drones LLC
World UAV Federation
Wuhan Geosun Navigation Technology
XPONENTIAL
YellowScan
Zarges, Inc.
Zephyr Drone Simulator
Zephyrs Ai, Inc
Zhengzhou Dupu Electronic Technology Co., Ltd.
Zhenghui New Energy (GPR POWER)

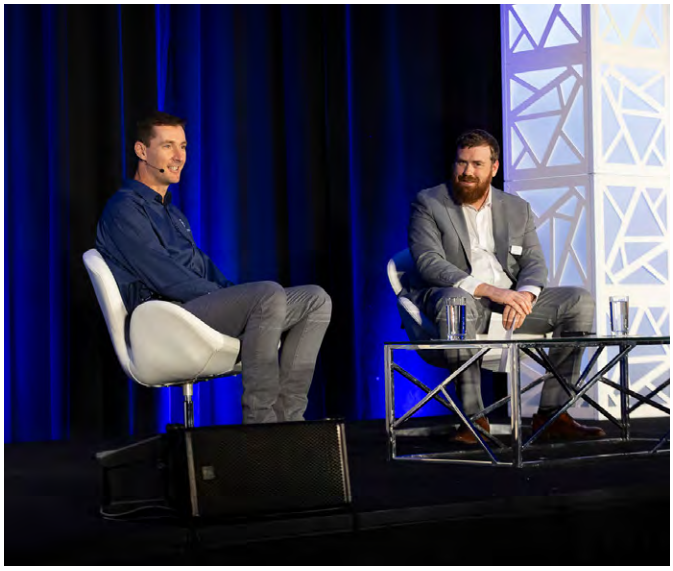
EVENT NEWS COVERAGE

> “Commercial UAV Expo is an outstanding event for anyone involved in the commercial drone industry. As a first-time attendee, I was impressed by the quality of the educational content, the diversity of exhibitors, and the opportunities to connect with industry leaders and end users. The event provides practical insights that can be applied immediately and is one of the best venues for staying informed on emerging technologies, regulations, and industry trends.”
>
> – Jonathan Randolph, Mason-Dixon Drone Services



COMMERCIAL UAV NEWS

DAY ONE RECAP: Commercial UAV Expo 2026 Kicks Off with Policy, Progress, and Play







Commercial UAV Expo 2026 kicked off with a highly anticipated session with a highly anticipated session that cut through the noise of the FCC's decisions to add foreign-made drones to its covered list. Moderated by CUAV News' Erin Williams, and joined on stage by Will Dawson, Ben Hance, and Jared Janacek, panelists discussed in depth what the ruling actually means for what you are doing today and the future of aircraft procurement in the United States. Despite the challenges the industry will face, panelist agreed they are staying cautiously optimistic for the future, while noting that this is surprisingly a good time for newcomers into the industry as this is a pivotal moment for everyone.

Following that was four insightful presentations that distinguished the characteristics of a drone business that thrives versus one that stalls. Each presentation provided invaluable advice on pricing, relationship management, and the power of knowing the lingo of your customers.

Opening Keynote

Later that day, these critical conversations continued on the keynote stage. In the keynote entitled *The View From the Field: What Operators, Pilots, and Fleet Managers Are Saying About the Commercial Drone Industry.* CUAV News' Matt Collins joined **Greg Reverdiau** of **Pilot Institute** to have a candid conversation about the state of the industry. The focal point of this session was the results of the survey we launched earlier this year where you made your voice heard. Here are a few key takeaways:

- Cost is the biggest barrier to adopting a new fleet
- Operators are taking a "wait and see" approach when it comes to buying new technology
- Now there is gap between product demand and manufacturing capabilities

The session wrapped up with Commercial UAV Expo's event partner, **DRONERESPONDERS**, announcing the recipient of the Eric Talley Memorial Award. This year's winner was **Greg Whiting**, sUAS Program Manager at the Texas Military Department. Greg earned this award for his work on developing and leading a rigorous three-week training program that brings together expertise from state, local, and military partners to prepare pilots for complex, real-world missions.

Exhibitor Showcases

The second half of the day included product presentations in the exhibitor showcase session. Here, exhibiting companies took the stage to show off their latest and greatest technologies, proving how the commercial UAV industry is advancing more every year.

UAS Summer Bash

The day went out with a bang as the doors to the show floor opened and our UAS Summer Bash welcome reception kicked off. After a day packed with educational sessions and workshops, this was a perfect time to reconnect with old friends and make a few new ones. This event also marked the start of drone soccer presented by FIDA and Hollywood Drones, with matches held in the indoor airspace in the Summit Ballroom.

DAY TWO RECAP: Public Safety, EASA Regulations, and Celebrating Wins







Commercial UAV Expo day two was full of highly insightful sessions, special events, and workshops. Attendees were eager to get back on the show floor after the previous night's happy hour.

Public Safety Education

Our partners at **DRONERESPONDERS** kicked off their conference programming by addressing where the UAV industry stands today in the realm of public safety in *The State of Public Safety UAS Operations*. Led by Jason Day, this panel dove into the current state of operations across law enforcement, fire, and emergency management. Panelists covered everything from policy to technology, a nice way to set the stage for the rest of the content to follow this week.

Day two also marked the second and final day of the DRONERESPONDERS Program Management Course. According to Day, the program was a success:

"The DRONERESPONDERS Program Managers Course at Commercial UAV Expo was a sold-out success, with nearly every seat filled by public safety professionals determined to take their UAS programs to the next level. Over two days, we dove into everything from program management and training development to SMS, strategic leadership, ROI, and the growing impact of AAM on public safety. The demand, engagement, and professionalism were incredible, and we can't wait to return next year with an even bigger, stronger course."

International Look at Regulations

In the session *EASA on the State of Drone Rules Across Europe*," moderated by Julie Garland of **Joint Authorities for Rulemaking on Unmanned Systems (JARUS)**, **European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)** representatives Daan Dousi, Giuseppe Scannapieco, and Stéphane Vaubourg walked through Europe's regulatory framework for drones and eVTOLs, covering the open, specific, and certified risk categories, the SORA methodology, and the growing role of standard scenarios in speeding up authorizations. The panel also detailed U-Space, Europe's UTM system, and the airspace fragmentation across 31 EASA member states and 46 air navigation service providers that complicates its rollout. Discussion closed with questions on industry engagement, cross-border authorization recognition, and the EASA-led Living Labs initiative aimed at scaling BVLOS operations across member states.

Conversations Flow at Roundtable Sessions

The first day of roundtable sessions brought attendees from all experience levels and industries together to discuss the most pressing issues everyone is facing today. Day one's session topics included education and workforce development, regulations, and safety management systems.

Scholarship Winners

The 2026 UAV Empower Scholarship winners were announced at the Pilot Hub. Congratulations to winners **Benedictus Dotu Nyan** and **Tatenda Gondo**. Presented by 2024 recipient **Nina Shack**, the event featured the winners sharing the journeys that brought them into the commercial drone space.

Pitch the Press

The afternoon held lots of excitement as Pitch the Press took to the Exhibit Hall Theater. This rapid-fire session featured quick presentations from exhibiting companies on the new and exciting technologies they had on display at the show. A panel of judges asked the questions everyone wanted answered, such as product availability and price points. Of the 14 companies selected to participate, three stood out to the judges. Congratulations to **Harris Aerial**, **Skyline Nav AI | Pathfinder**, and **UtopiaCompression Corporation** on your win! These companies showcased a variety of technology that will play a major role in advancing the drone industry and the safety of operators and the public.

DAY THREE RECAP: PASA and FAA Keynote, Standards, Night Flight Workshop



The final day of Commercial UAV Expo 2026 was bittersweet, but that didn't stop the buzz we saw in the first two days. Day three gave attendees an inside look into the minds of those creating the policies that dictate the UAS airspace, both stateside and internationally. Seats in conference rooms and other presentation areas stayed filled to the end of the event, proving there is always more to learn!

FAA and EASA Come Together

The final keynote of the show brought together the **Federal Aviation Administration** and **EASA** at a critical time for the commercial UAV industry. Julie Garland of JARUS moderated a conversation between Robert Reckert of the FAA and Daan Dousi of EASA, who compared the regulatory structures set by both organizations and discussed what the future of the airspace would look like in the age of BVLOS operations.

Despite being oceans apart, the core challenges were the same. Public acceptance, risk mitigation, and acceptance from other aircraft operators remained the priority for both the FAA and EASA.

NIST Standardized Test Methods Demonstrated

The indoor airspace buzzed with live flying demonstrations in the two NIST Standardized Test Methods sessions that ran on day three. These demonstrations included in-depth demos showing different levels of flying skills, from level 1 flights in open areas to level 5 flights in confined spaces. The session included video demonstrations of different testing level scenarios, then moved over to the drone cage to show the audience the exact skills they are testing for.

Pilot Hub Sessions

Pilot Institute continued their education sessions in the Pilot Hub on the Exhibit Hall floor on day three. These sessions were a can't-miss for any experience level of operator. From learning how to enhance your deliverables to how to scale your drone program like a fortune 500 company would, attendees received tangible skills they can put to use when they get back to the office.

Inside the FAA's Emerging Technologies Division

In an afternoon session, Matt Collins was joined by Marcus Cunningham, manager of the Branch of Technologies and Standards with the FAA, for a chat about the Office of Emerging Technologies and the work being done there. Among other topics, the conversation touched on how the FAA works with standards bodies to create the right infrastructure for future regulations, the most important technologies the office is monitoring moving forward for the industry, and what industry members should know about presenting new operations or technologies to the division.

Night UAV Flight Workshop

While the show floor closed in the afternoon, **Sundance Media Group** stayed in Vegas to run their *Night UAV Flight Workshop*. The two-part workshop started at CUAV Expo with a classroom briefing, then continued off-site with practical training on how to fly in the dark and handle the challenges that come with it.

PRESS COVERAGE & SOCIAL MEDIA

HIGHWAYS TODAY

COMMERCIAL UAV EXPO WINNERS FOCUS ON THE PRACTICAL FUTURE OF DRONE OPERATIONS

UASWEEKLY.COM

COMMERCIAL UAV EXPO 2026 SETS ATTENDANCE RECORD AS DRONE INDUSTRY FACES REGULATORY SHIFT

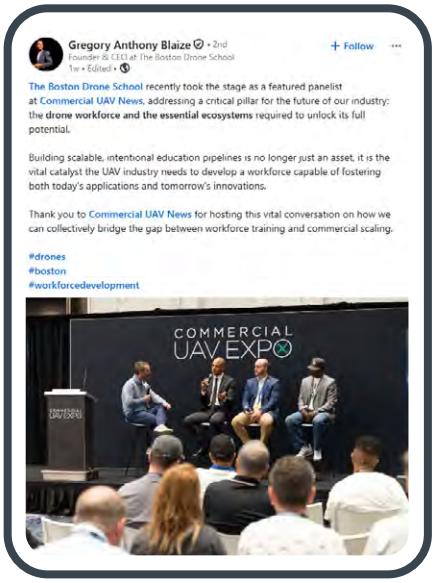
DRONEXL

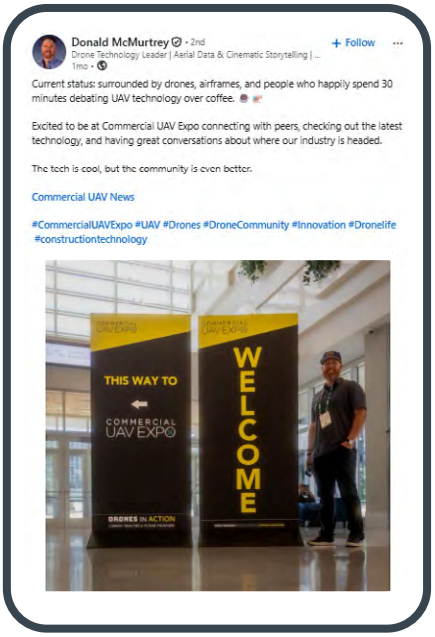
INFINITE ELECTRONICS: COUNTER-DRONE DEMAND NOW OUTPACES DRONES

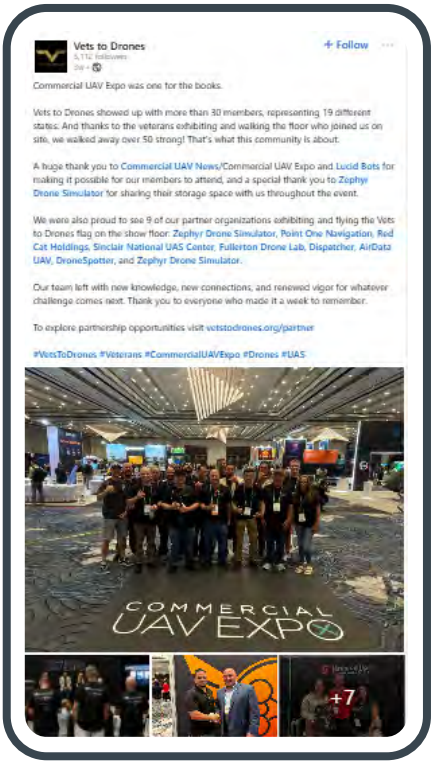
GEO WEEK NEWS

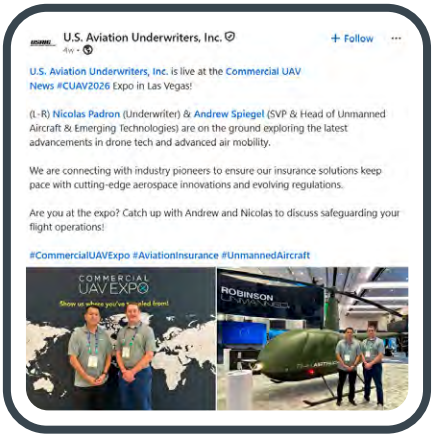
INSIDE COMMERCIAL UAV EXPO 2026: THE ONE WHERE THE INDUSTRY KEEPS MATURING











CONFERENCE INFORMATION

> “Commercial UAV Expo 2026 provided an excellent view into where the industry is heading and, more importantly, what it will take to get there. The discussions around BVLOS, Part 108, Part 146, UTM, and scalable operations went beyond theory and focused on the practical regulatory, technology, safety, and operational challenges organizations need to address today. I left the Expo with a much clearer perspective on how commercial UAS is evolving from individual drone operations into integrated aviation systems.”
>
> – Scott England, Oliver Wyman Vector



KEYNOTES

THE VIEW FROM THE FIELD: WHAT OPERATORS, PILOTS, AND FLEET MANAGERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE COMMERCIAL DRONE INDUSTRY



MATT COLLINS
Content Manager
Commercial UAV News



GREG REVERDIAU
Co-Founder
Pilot Institute



TWO SKIES, ONE CONVERSATION: COMPARING FAA AND EASA APPROACHES TO BVLOS DRONE OPERATIONS



JULIE GARLAND
CEO
Avtrain



DAAN DOUSI
Head of Department, Innovative Air Mobility
EASA



ROBERT RECKERT
Head of Department, Acting Division Manager, Emerging Technologies Division, Flight Standards
FAA

VIEW THE
2026 CONFERENCE PROGRAM

PILOT HUB

COMMERCIAL UAV EXPO

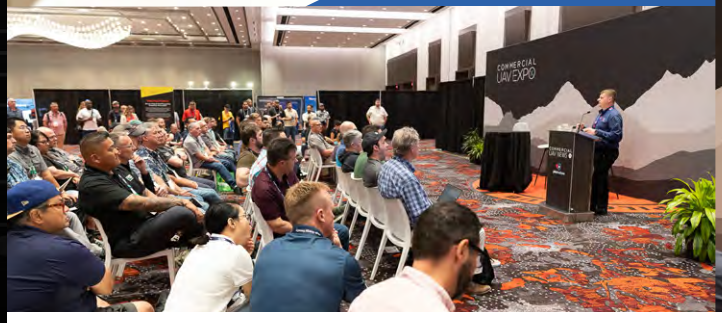
pilotinstitute

The Pilot Hub at Commercial UAV Expo offered a unique opportunity to tap into the wealth of knowledge and expertise fostered by industry experts. Current and future drone pilots had dedicated content and workshops on the Exhibit Hall Floor.











FEATURED SESSIONS

COMMERCIAL UAV EXPO | DRONERESPONDERS | pilotinstitute

Along with two keynote sessions, Commercial UAV Expo 2026 offered a conference program built for the full spectrum of commercial drone professionals. Sessions addressed the needs of certified pilots sharpening their skills, UAS program managers navigating fleet transitions and regulatory changes, surveyors expanding what their data can do, and public safety operators integrating drones into critical response workflows.

Commercial UAV Expo continued its partnership with DRONERESPONDERS and Pilot Institute to develop custom sessions that move past broad overviews and deliver practical, actionable insights for the field, the office, and the air. Attendees heard how the most innovative UAV technology is being used today and where it is headed next.

Couldn't attend everything? Commercial UAV News has you covered.



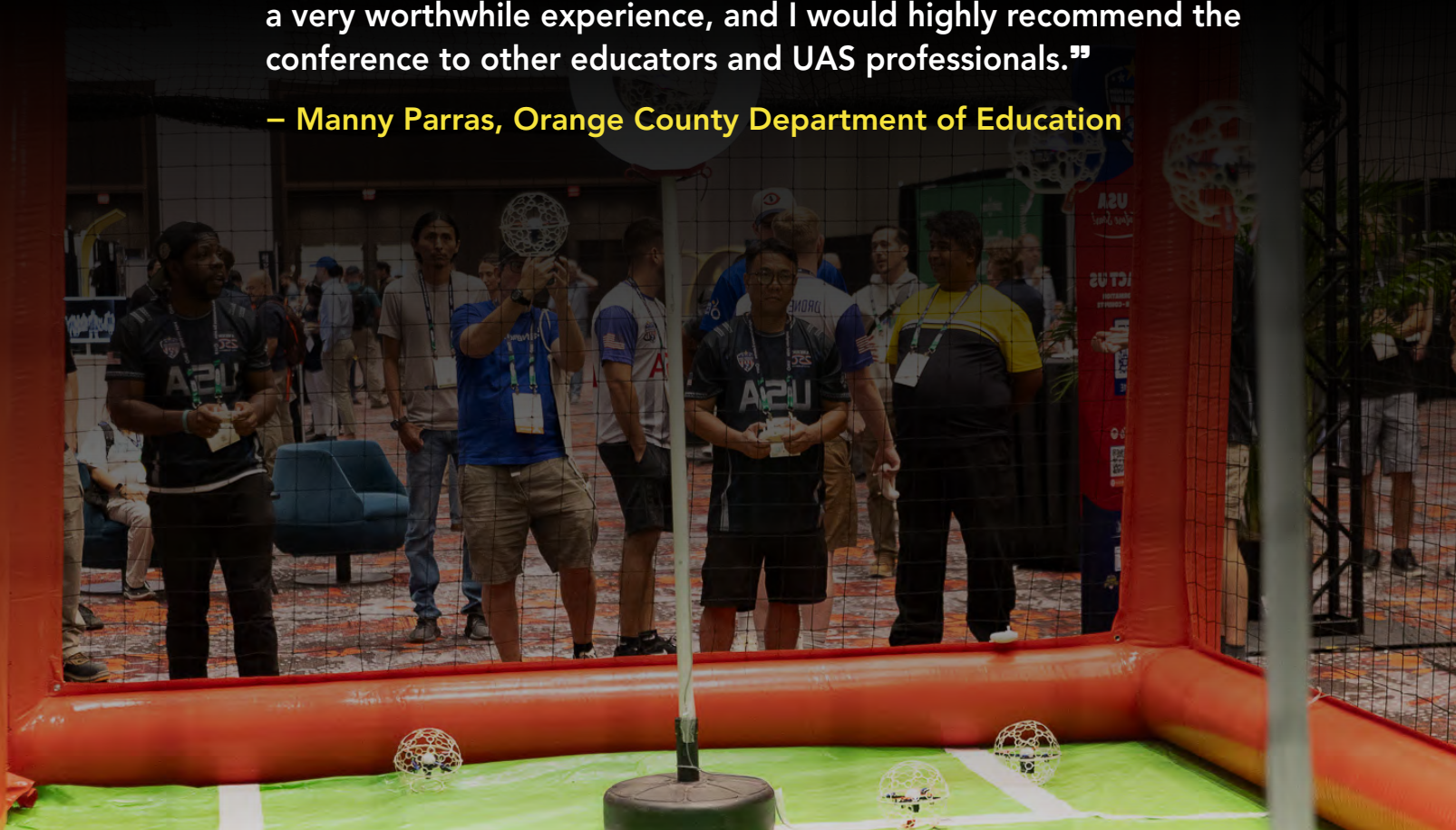
READ the 2026 Takeaways





SPECIAL ONSITE EVENTS & SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

> “Commercial UAV Expo provided an excellent opportunity to learn about the latest UAV technologies, applications, and industry trends while connecting directly with manufacturers and industry professionals. As a CTE Drone Technology instructor, I found the educational sessions and exhibit hall especially valuable because I can bring what I learned back to my students and better prepare them for careers in the UAS industry. The networking opportunities also helped me identify potential industry partnerships and resources for our drone program. Overall, it was a very worthwhile experience, and I would highly recommend the conference to other educators and UAS professionals.”
>
> – Manny Parras, Orange County Department of Education



SPECIAL ONSITE EVENTS & SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

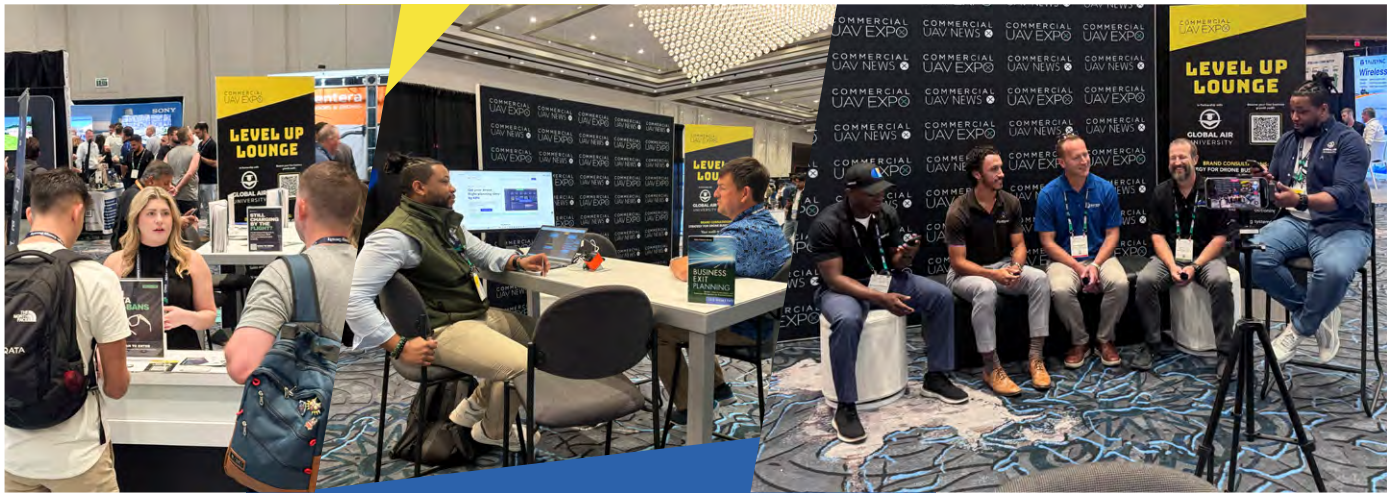
LEVEL UP LOUNGE

In partnership with GLOBAL AIR UNIVERSITY

In 2026, Commercial UAV Expo partnered with Global Air U to co-host the Level Up Lounge, an innovation space dedicated to personal, professional, and brand development. With the mission to empower UAV professionals with the best resources, tools, and insights to take their brands to the next level!

> "I expected a few pointers on my website or marketing. Instead, we got into who I'm actually trying to sell to and how to approach those customers. That's the kind of help you don't normally get at a trade show."
>
> – Adrian Cook

200 CONSULTATIONS and 396 VISITORS



COMMERCIAL UAV NEWS COVERAGE



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE COMMERCIAL UAV EXPO ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS

BY ERIN WILLIAMS

There was no shortage of topics to discussed at this year's Commercial UAV Expo. To make sure those conversations happened with the right people and were accessible to everyone, the Roundtable Sessions held space for exactly that. Instead of a traditional presentation or panel on stage, the room was designed to have attendees sit down with one another and a subject matter expert we called the discussion facilitator, to have a candid conversation on what challenges they are facing in the industry today.

This 2026 roundtable room hosted essential conversations on regulations, workforce and education, agriculture, business ownership, and safety. Here are some key considerations drawn from each session, featuring some reflection from the discussion facilitators from these sessions

Agriculture

Drones are becoming increasingly common on farms for their precision spraying capabilities, which have shown the capability to save growers time and money. But while drones have proven themselves a valuable tool in the field, a few roadblocks are still standing in the way of widespread adoption. Based on the conversations held at the *Drones on the Farm* roundtable, some of those roadblocks came into greater focus.

Discussion facilitator Ashley Hanson of John Deere Aviation pointed to a lack of standards across the country as a major source of delay and frustration for drone service providers trying to serve clients across state lines.

"There is not a clear process of what is required for drone spray operations state by state," Hanson said. "Every state differs, along with its state drone registration process. Oftentimes the federal process must be completed before the state process, and that causes long lead times to get up and running."

Other participants pointed instead to the need for better relationship-building and education within the agricultural sector. Discussion leader Jacob Thomas of Lee County Mosquito Control District shared a story that stood out to him

about the value of that kind of mentorship.

"There was a great example of that happening in real time," Thomas said. "Two seasoned agricultural spraying professionals were working with a woman representing a California grower and walking her through how she could begin using geospatial tools to improve her operation. Rather than just discussing the technology at a high level, they were helping her think through practical first steps and how those tools could solve problems for her specific operation."

"A recurring theme throughout the session was that successful adoption isn't simply about having access to the newest aircraft or software," Thomas continued. "Education, mentorship, and understanding how to apply the technology to a real operational need are just as important."

Regulations

Roundtable discussions dedicated to regulations **weren't the only place these conversations happened** at the Expo, but they offered a unique opportunity to sit down with subject matter experts and talk through the issues at hand directly. While the details of each conversation varied, an overall mood emerged: uncertainty mixed with excitement for the future, and an eagerness for answers.

"I think the main focus was on how to think about the convergence of high regulatory standards being stated, enforcement going largely unseen in agriculture, and changes that are coming. But what are the right steps?" said Will Dawson of The Agriculture Drone Initiative. "I think, overall, there's a lot of enthusiasm in the long term but uncertainty in the short term. The mood was, 'ready to have some questions answered so we can all get to work implementing this technology.'"

Part 108 was a major point of discussion. "Attendees wanted to understand what Part 108 could mean in practice, what may change for existing programs, and what they should be doing now rather than waiting for a final rule," said Mary-Lou Smulders from Airdata UAV.

Recurring questions also centered on the operational infrastructure needed to scale safely: how to manage pilot qualifications and currency, aircraft and battery readiness, maintenance records, flight documentation, and regulatory reporting, especially across mixed fleets and increasingly autonomous operations.

"The larger question is how organizations operationalize that authority legally, safely, consistently, and at scale," Smulders said. That question resonated especially with attendees from construction, mining, and public-safety backgrounds.



"As programs expand from a handful of pilots and aircraft to larger fleets and multiple locations, spreadsheets and disconnected point solutions quickly become inadequate," she said. "Attendees recognized the growing need for a unified operational system of record that connects what happens before, during, and after every flight, including airspace and weather checks, aircraft readiness, pilot credentials, live situational awareness, maintenance, and compliance documentation."

Business Ownership

This growing industry is inviting more and more people to start their own drone business, but doing so on your own can be daunting. To help ease some of that burden and foster a sense of community, the roundtable *Tips for Getting Your Drone Business off the Ground* did just that.

Conversations here often circled back to Part 107. "The questions were all about where to start with getting airspace approval," said Zane Andrews of Cascade Flight, LLC. "I think it's important to highlight that the Part 107 test doesn't necessarily prepare you for how to do that in the field, it's a question almost everyone has when they start doing commercial drone work on their own. My questions were all along the lines of, 'How do I fly here if I don't know what the airspace is?' or 'Do I have to submit this approval to fly here on the map?'"

"More education is needed, especially on waivers and regulations," Andrews continued. "There should be more resources and information on how to go about it the right

way, specifically from an unmanned perspective. A lot of the information on the Part 107 exam is more applicable to manned pilots."

Safety Management Systems

Safety remains a priority for all operators. This discussion focused specifically on the safety management systems that keep pilots safe and compliant in the airspace they operate in. Based on what we learned from the conversations in this room, there is a lot of work to be done.

"Small organizations are using 'trust' as their risk mitigation," said Paul Rossi of Nine Ten Drones. "The company owner knows her pilots are doing the right thing because she's known them for years and trusts them. But my favorite comment to folks when discussing safety is: trust will not stand up in an audit, documentation will. It's easy to trust everyone until you start to scale."

Wyatt Bowles echoed a related concern about internal alignment. "Across the groups, the general takeaway I had was that many organizations, regardless of size, still struggle with getting information around SMS to the wider organization, which can lead to silos," Bowles said. "Without executive buy-in at the top and an effort from within personnel, the safety management systems put in place by those leading UAS efforts inside the company generally fall flat."

Education and Workforce Development

"Colleges and training providers need clearer, more consistent input from industry so their programs prepare students for real employment opportunities," said Jennifer Audette from the FAA. A recurring question in her session was how to demonstrate the value of drone-related degrees and training programs, particularly to parents footing the bill for their child's education. Parents, educators, and counselors alike need a better understanding of the wide range of careers available in this growing field.

"What stood out most to me was the shared recognition that no single organization can address these challenges alone," Audette said. "Workforce development is a puzzle. Many of the pieces already exist, but we need to do a better job connecting them."



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HARRIS AERIAL, SKYLINE NAV AI, AND UTOPIACOMPRESSION WIN "PITCH THE PRESS" AT COMMERCIAL UAV EXPO 2026

Top Products and Solutions Selected by Leading UAV Industry Journalists

Las Vegas, NV, September 3, 2026 – **Harris Aerial**, **Skyline Nav AI**, and **UtopiaCompression** have been named the three winners of the annual "Pitch the Press" competition at **Commercial UAV Expo**, the leading international trade show and conference focused on commercial drone technology.

Each year, Commercial UAV Expo hosts "Pitch the Press," a unique opportunity for exhibitors to present their products to a group of editors and reporters looking for the most unique new technology being showcased at Commercial UAV Expo. Fourteen exhibitors were selected from a large pool of applicants to share their new product or service during the one-hour event. Each exhibitor gave a two-minute elevator pitch to members of the media, followed by a short Q&A.

This year's judges included David Oakes, Editor at US Drone Review, Haye Kesteloo, Owner of DroneXL.CO, and Patrick Egan, CEO of sUAS News USA. During "Pitch the Press," these judges listened to two-minute pitches from the company representative. They then evaluated the presentations, looking for innovation and potential for ROI, to select the top three.

2026 winners were:

- Harris Aerial
- Skyline Nav AI
- UtopiaCompression Corporation

"The presentations, and the buzz around them, at this year's Pitch the Press was one of the highlights of the day," said Matt Collins, Content Manager with Commercial UAV News, who served as the moderator for the event. "In particular, the technology showcased by the three winning companies were solutions filling real needs in the current market. It is inspiring to see where the technology is today, putting the entire industry in a position to thrive both in the present and into the future."

What stood out to the judges most was Harris Aerial's humble beginnings and current commitment to stateside manufacturing, noting that this represents a huge shift in the market. They also appreciated that the product was complete system. The company presented their newest product to hit the market later this year, the H4C Quad: a compact, medium-lift drone that is NDAA compliant and payload agnostic at an affordable price. The judges noted the importance of the mission behind Skyline Nav AI's Pathfinder Edge, a lightweight, plug-and-play hardware box that provides precise, GPS-independent navigation for drones and is expected to be an essential tool for public safety missions. They also recognized the value of UtopiaCompression's Aero Vision Detect to the wider industry, noting that as drone traffic increases, aircraft detection becomes critical.

Below is a complete list of companies that took part in Pitch the Press:

- Amazon
- EagleNXT
- EVBots
- GeoCue
- Infinite Electronics
- RIEGL
- TENSAR
- ThinkOrbital
- UAS Sentry
- Unmanned Safety Institute
- WEFLO
- Flyguys

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COMMERCIAL UAV EXPO'S KEYNOTE ADDRESSES THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY SURVEY, AND WINNER OF THE ERIC TALLEY MEMORIAL AWARD

SOCIAL IMPACT

> “As a 2026 UAV Empower scholarship recipient and Embry-Riddle student, Commercial UAV Expo gave me something a classroom cannot: three days in the same room as the people actually flying, spraying, regulating, and building commercial drone programs. I left with contacts, context, and a clearer path into the industry.”
>
> – Tatenda Gondo, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University



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Commercial UAV Expo is accountable and committed to contributing to the well-being of communities and society through environmental and social measures.

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As a leader in the global expositions and conference industry, Diversified Communications, the organizer of Commercial UAV Expo, recognizes its responsibility to understand and prioritize actions to reduce the carbon impact of the events it produces. Learn what we are doing at Commercial UAV Expo this year, and what you can do to help.

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UAV Empower
UAV Empower is part of Diversified Communications' Diversity, Equity + Inclusion efforts to drive discussions and actively advance the principles of racial equality, social justice, and inclusion. Through these efforts, we aim to influence and encourage an ecosystem for the open exchange of ideas and the ongoing pursuit of best practices. Learn more about Commercial UAV Expo's DEI initiative and how we can support your efforts in this area.

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