American Bureau of Shipping Issues Full Class for Saildrone Surveyor Ocean-going USV

The Saildrone Surveyor is a 20-meter USV capable of long-endurance missions in the open ocean, collecting deep-ocean bathymetry and performing a wide range of maritime domain awareness tasks—from anti-submarine warfare (ASW) to trans-ocean cable route surveys.

Full ABS classification sets a new benchmark for safety and reliability of autonomous maritime operations.

From Saildrone, Aug. 17, 2025

ALAMEDA, Calif. – Saildrone, the global leader in maritime autonomy, today announced that its Surveyor-class of unmanned surface vehicle (USV) has received full classification from the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS). This milestone follows the Voyager, Saildrone's coastal and near-shore USV, which

received ABS class in 2023.

This landmark achievement sets a new global benchmark for unmanned systems and highlights Saildrone's leadership in developing fully classed, open-ocean-capable USVs.

While other platforms have received certificates or interim approvals under evolving unmanned vessel frameworks, no other USV or UUV has yet received full classification status from any classification society. ABS is the first to grant full class to an unmanned platform, marking a key milestone for the industry.

The classification notation assigned is ✠A1, DV Naval Craft, AUTONOMOUS (NAV, MNV, PRP, AUX, RO3), which follows the "Rules for Building and Classing Light Warships, Patrol, and High-Speed Naval Vessels (2023)."

"The ABS class certification is more than a certificate—it's a signal to governments and the maritime industry that Saildrone USVs are mature, safe, tested, and ready for scale," said Richard Jenkins, Saildrone founder and CEO. "It's been a very large investment and a multi-year process to achieve ABS Class Certification, but we are proud to be the first company in the world to do so and proud that our systems have reached the highest standards as required by the ABS Class certificate."

ABS class is an internationally recognized standard for safety, design integrity, and operational reliability. The classification process is a rigorous review and validation of a vessel's design, construction, and autonomous control systems. For unmanned platforms like the Saildrone Surveyor and Saildrone Voyager, this process includes autonomous control systems, cybersecure communications, structural integrity, and fail-safe redundancies, ensuring the vehicle can safely operate without crew, even in complex, unpredictable ocean conditions.

The 20-meter Surveyor is capable of long-endurance missions in

the open ocean, collecting deep-ocean bathymetry and performing a wide range of maritime domain awareness tasks—from anti-submarine warfare (ASW) to trans-ocean cable route surveys. The 10-meter Voyager is designed for persistent surveillance in coastal and near-shore environments, complementing the Surveyor's blue-water capabilities. Both platforms are capable of fully autonomous operations with no humans on board and are remotely monitored 24/7 by Saildrone's global Mission Management team.

"ABS and Saildrone are pioneering new frontiers, setting the pace for innovation. This step forward is a result of our investments in ABS' technical capability and helping to ensure our Rules are able to support innovation with an unwavering focus on safety," said Patrick Ryan, ABS Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer.

"This is just the latest in a series of confidence-building actions from ABS for autonomous technologies in maritime, including the issuance of interim class for the 10-meter Saildrone Voyager. We're proud to collaborate with trailblazing companies like Saildrone to advance safe, innovative solutions for autonomous and remotely operated ocean missions," said Christopher J. Wiernicki, ABS Chairman and CEO.

Saildrone USVs are currently supporting missions around the world, including ocean mapping, border security, persistent ISR, and critical infrastructure security. With both its Surveyor and Voyager platforms fully classed by ABS, Saildrone is uniquely positioned to support the next generation of naval and commercial unmanned operations.