

ROBOT LAW EXPLAINED

Category: Technology Law
written by Diana Schwarz | February 5, 2018



Robot Law is a relatively new and emerging field of law in South Africa.

It is rather an exciting field to delve into and includes concepts such as driverless vehicles, drones and everything to do with robots.

It is worth mentioning at this point the famous science-fiction writer, Isaac Asimov's, three fictional laws of robotics being:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Whilst these 3 laws are fictional, much can be drawn from them.

Robot Law will deal with a plethora of issues, including, the legal status of robots, liability for defective robots, contracts and the protection of intellectual property in respect of robots, the development of robots, an individual's right to privacy in respect of robots, the use of robots, personal information and data protection in respect of robots; and whether robots have any rights, as well as many more issues.

There are no specific or direct laws on robots in South Africa yet, however because the laws of the country will be applicable, the following legislation may apply:

1. The Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 ("POPIA");
2. Part 101 of the Civil Aviation Regulations 2011;
3. The Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008;
4. The National Road Traffic Act 93 of 1996 and the National Road Traffic Regulations, 2000; and
5. The Medicines and Related Substances Amendment Act 14 of 2015.

Intellectual Property law in respect of copyright will also have significance.

There is also no regulatory body in South Africa for robots at present. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) however regulates the use of drones in South Africa.

The most incredible part of all this is that these are just the basics of Robot Law, and further exciting developments in this field are on the horizon.