

POLICY & DATA REVIEW OF NOPD DRONE USAGE: 2024-2026



EDITH ROMERO, ORGANIZER EYE ON SURVEILLANCE
SARAH WHITTINGTON, ADVOCACY DIRECTOR ACLU OF LOUISIANA

ACLU
Louisiana



EYE ON SURVEILLANCE



Skydio x10 model -

Max ground speed with standard obstacle avoidance: 35 mph

Standard thermal imaging camera

Max flight time 40 minutes

Resolution of 4K HD+ - can read license plates at 800 feet

2024 POLICY

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

3. NOPD sUAS shall be used only to support NOPD operations or pursuant to a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Cooperating Endeavor Agreement (CEA) with another law enforcement agency which has been approved by the Superintendent of Police. A copy of the MOU or CEA shall be kept on file by the Professional Standards and Accountability Bureau (PSAB).

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

21. m. Other uses of the sUAS not contemplated by this policy may only be approved by the Superintendent of police, in writing, prior to the deployment of the sUAS.

2024 POLICY

DATA REVIEW & ANNUAL REPORTING

53. All NOPD personnel assigned to maintain and operate an sUAS shall ensure all flight logs, pre-flight checklists, and any other data captured is provided to and available for review by PSAB (Professional Standards and Accountability Bureau).

54. PSAB shall review all flight documentation quarterly. Data from the review will be made available publicly and include, at minimum, a summary of the following:

- a. The number of uses;
- b. The type and purpose of the use;
- c. The NOPD District and sector of each mission/use;
- d. **Whether the use was within the guidelines of this chapter;**
- e. **Whether the use was effective for the intended purpose;**
- f. **If used during an ongoing criminal investigation, the demographic and arrest information;**
- g. **If there were any safety concerns because of the use;**
- h. **Any equipment concerns;** and
- i. flight time, to include a review of flight logs or data from flight time counters.

55. NOPD shall publish an annual report, prepared by PSAB, documenting the use of NOPD sUAS. This report shall be reviewed and shared with the community.

SKYDIO DRONE DEPLOYMENTS

**Jan 1, 2025 -
Jan 30, 2026**

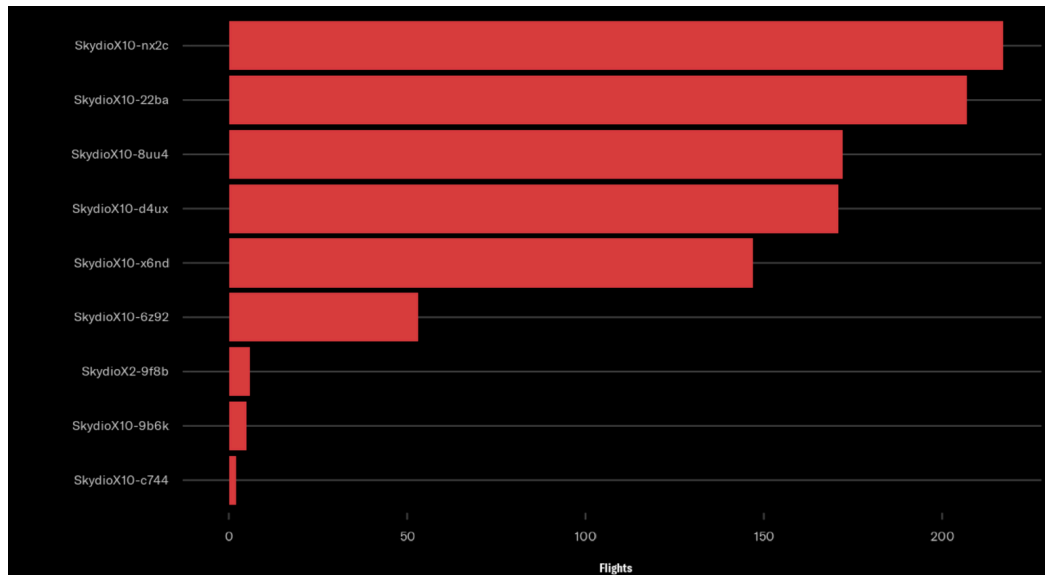
MISSING DATA

- **1,000 flight records**
- **78.7%** of flights are missing the type of incident
- **93.1%** are missing the incident details, making it nearly impossible to understand what the drone was used for;
- **94.1%** of flights are missing the summary of activities required under Section 16(f); and
- **94.1%** of flights are missing the supervisor approval required under Section 14, and equipment, safety, and effectiveness reports under Section 16 (g)-(i);
- **98.9%** of flights are missing whether it assisted officers

SKYDIO DRONE DEPLOYMENTS

Jan 1, 2025 -
Jan 30, 2026

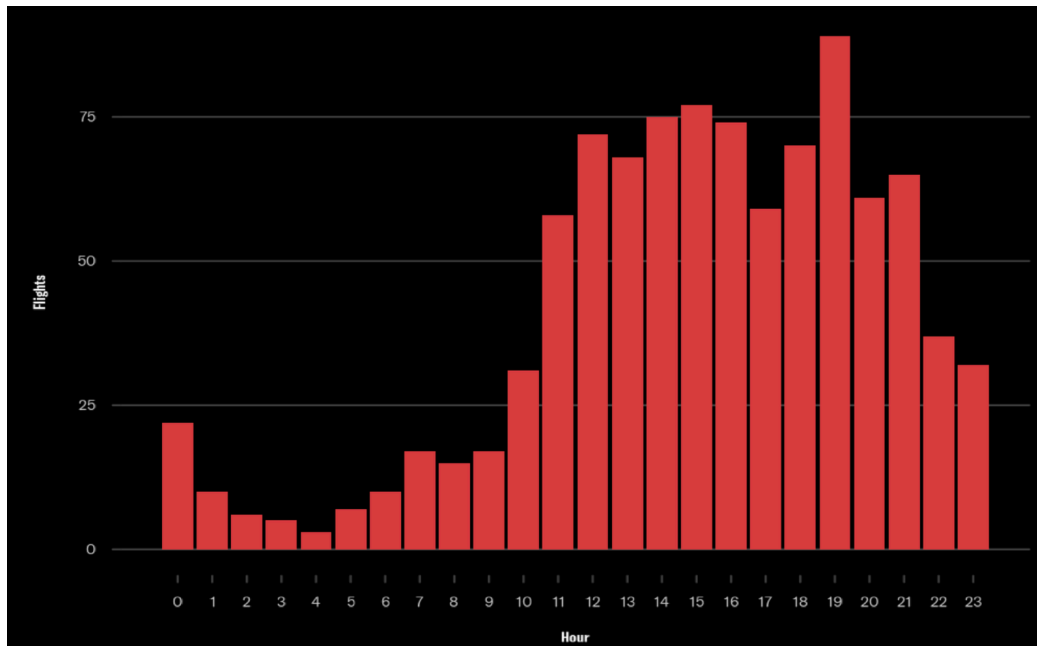
DRONE MODELS DEPLOYED



SKYDIO DRONE DEPLOYMENTS

Jan 1, 2025 -
Jan 30, 2026

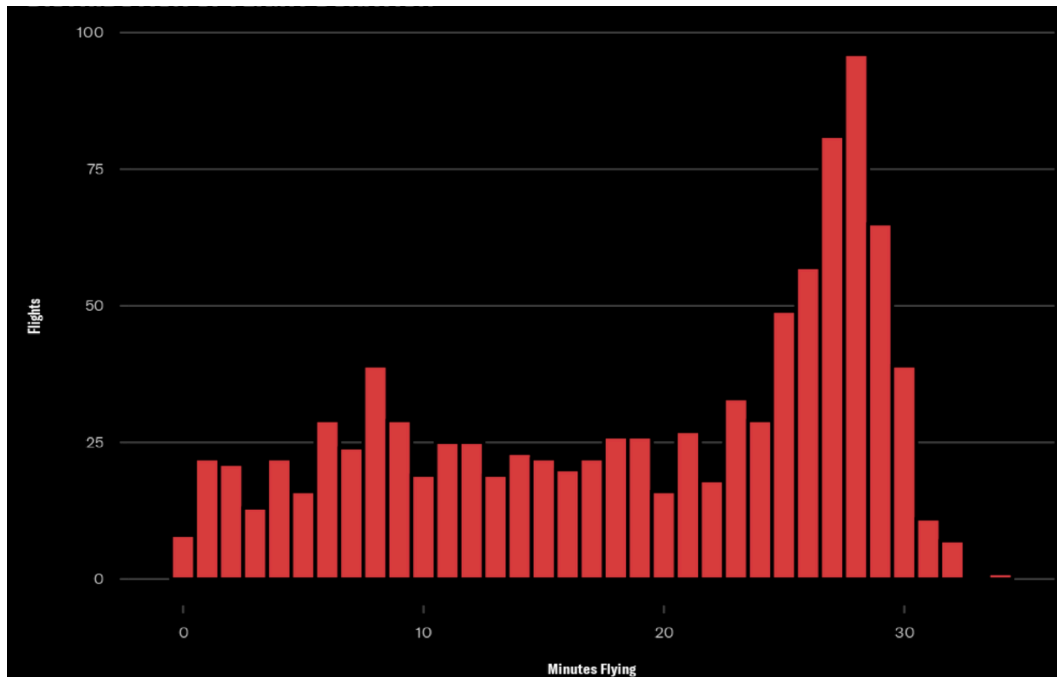
WHEN DRONES WERE FLOWN



SKYDIO DRONE DEPLOYMENTS

Jan 1, 2025 -
Jan 30, 2026

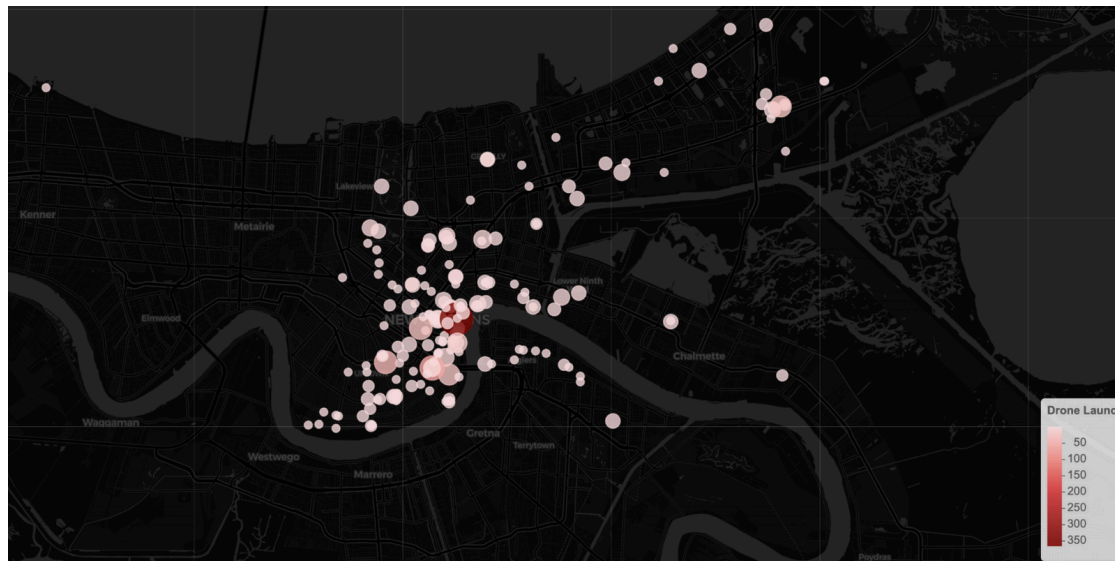
FLIGHT LENGTH



SKYDIO DRONE DEPLOYMENTS

Jan 1, 2025 -
Jan 30, 2026

DRONE LAUNCH SITES



SKYDIO DRONE DEPLOYMENTS

**Jan 1, 2025 -
Jan 30, 2026**

PURPOSE OF DRONE DEPLOYMENT

Deployments responding to:

- People allegedly “blocking” sidewalks, including one described as: “Dispatch call for service, HOMELESS PERSON BLOCKING THE SIDEWALK.”
- Protests
- Second-line Parade
- Festivals
- The Sugar Bowl
- Other public gatherings.

SKYDIO DRONE DEPLOYMENTS

**Jan 30, 2026 -
Mar 29, 2026**

MISSING DATA

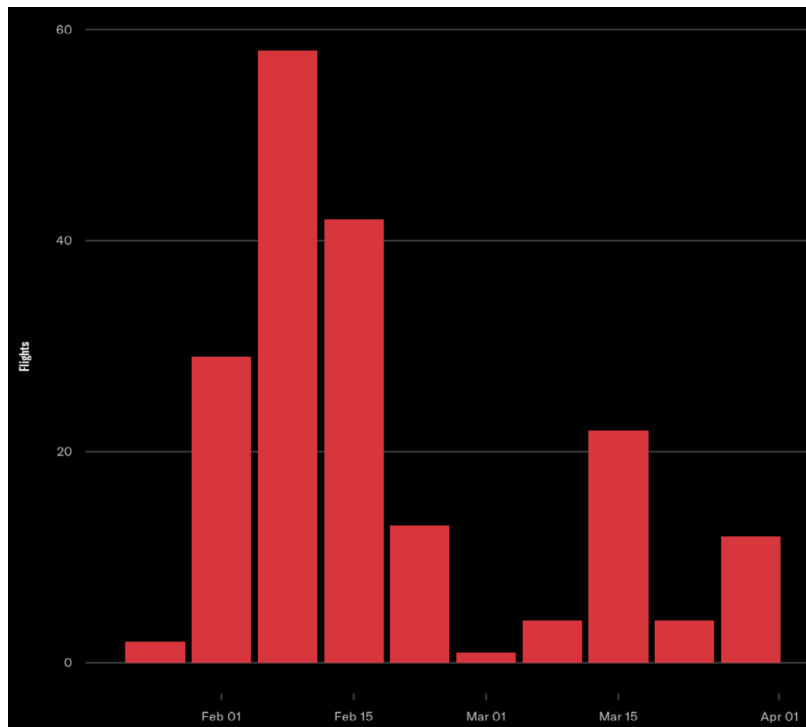
- **187 flights**
- No “other notes”
- **100%** of records missing details about whether the drone assisted or not
- **100%** missing Incident details
- **100%** missing whether the drone assisted or not
- **100%** missing whether the drone cleared the scene for officers
- **100%** missing whether the drone got to the scene first
- **99%** missing type of incident – 2 entries for “event overwatch on 2/22 on St. Claude Ave.
- **Supervisor variable was completely cut from this dataset.**

SKYDIO DRONE DEPLOYMENTS

Jan 30, 2026 -
Mar 29, 2026

FLIGHTS PER WEEK

Distribution shows increased usage during Mardi-Gras as expected.

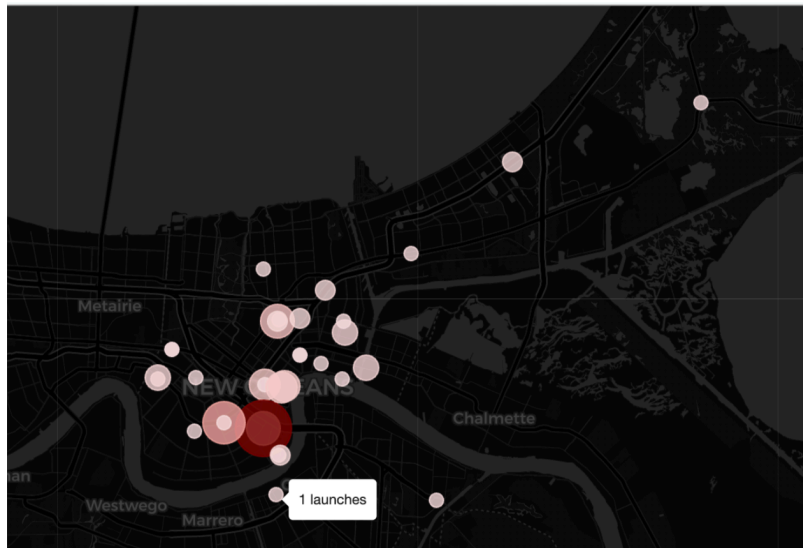


SKYDIO DRONE DEPLOYMENTS

Jan 30, 2026 -
Mar 29, 2026

DRONE LAUNCH SITES

A drone was deployed outside of New Orleans at **471 Manhattan Boulevard, Harvey, Louisiana**. Flight ID: 46d4f2c4-4fce-432b-bc07-a054414e1b0a.



This is everything we received

What we don't have is the reason
or explanation.

POLICY CHANGES

June 21, 2026

DRONE WEAPONIZATION

"The sUAS shall not be equipped with weapons of any kind **without prior approval**, in writing, from the Superintendent of Police."

POLICY CHANGES

2024 vs. 2026

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

2024

"NOPD sUAS shall be used only to support NOPD operations or pursuant to a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Cooperating Endeavor Agreement (CEA) with another law enforcement agency which has been approved by the Superintendent of Police. A copy of the MOU or CEA shall be kept on file by the Professional Standards and Accountability Bureau (PSAB)."

2026

"NOPD sUAS may be used to support NOPD operations, including assisting with responding to calls for service, or to assist other law enforcement agency operations."

This is a change from requiring MOUs or CEAs approved by the Superintendent and on file with the PSAB.

POLICY CHANGES 2024 vs. 2026

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

2024

"Other uses of the sUAS not contemplated by this policy may only be approved by the Superintendent of police, in writing, **prior** to the deployment of the sUAS."

2026

"Other uses of the sUAS not contemplated by this policy, including DFR deployments, may be approved by the Superintendent of police, in writing."

Drones as First Responders is entirely new in the 2026 policy including its operation – but this use not contemplated previously required written approval prior to use/flight

DRONES AS FIRST RESPONDERS

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

What this would allow:

Constant calls for drones in response to calls for service

- Claims of staffing efficiencies, de-escalation and safety are not supported by publicly available evidence and peer-reviewed literature.
- Potential for significant 1st and 4th Amendment exposure. Mission creep documented in many similar jurisdictions.
- Policy language alone is insufficient

POLICY CHANGES 2024 vs. 2026

2024

DATA REVIEW & ANNUAL REPORTING

"All NOPD personnel assigned to maintain and operate an sUAS shall ensure all flight logs, pre-flight checklists, and any other data captured is provided to and available for review by PSAB (Professional Standards and Accountability Bureau).

PSAB shall review all flight documentation quarterly. Data from the review will be made available publicly and include, at minimum, a summary of the following:

- a. The number of uses;
- b. The type and purpose of the use;
- c. The NOPD District and sector of each mission/use;
- d. Whether the use was within the guidelines of this chapter;
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- g. If there were any safety concerns because of the use;
- h. Any equipment concerns; and
- i. flight time, to include a review of flight logs or data from flight time counters.

NOPD shall publish an annual report, prepared by PSAB, documenting the use of NOPD sUAS. This report shall be reviewed and shared with the community."

POLICY CHANGES

2024 vs. 2026

DATA REVIEW & ANNUAL REPORTING

2026

"63. All NOPD personnel assigned to maintain and operate an sUAS shall ensure all Post-Flight Reports and any other data captured is accessible for review by NOPD's Professional Standards Section.

64. The Drone Program Coordinators shall ensure all information captured in the post-flight reports is properly updating to the Department's designated public-facing dashboard **unless operational security of privacy concerns** prevent the information from being provided publicly."

WHAT WE ARE WAITING FOR...

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTED

- Training Documents.
- Drone footage from flights as an example of the data and information we are seeking.
- Physical records of the forms NOPD allegedly uses to track flight details.
- Planned location for drone docking stations

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

WE ARE ASKING THE COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

- Costs
- Police officer time/resource dedication
- Inherent dangers with equipment failure and crashes
- Where is the drone footage, and who has access/review
- Public reporting portal of drone locations to compare flight logs with sightings for accountability and possible civil rights violations
- When is the camera facing down? What footage is being collected, and of what?
- Public comment, vetting, feedback on policies
- Best practices policies, including demographic information
- Independent evaluations of the frequency of valuable flights and value of the program
- Observe drone operations from top-to-bottom (including the call for service that prompted each call, officer communications during the deployment, etc)
- Report to the public the percentage of actually useful flights under these programs

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

SUSPEND THE DRONE PROGRAM

The drone program should be suspended until the City can verify that the department is capable of operating the program lawfully, safely, and transparently.

MAKE ANY FUTURE PROGRAM CONDITIONAL ON ENFORCEABLE ACCOUNTABILITY

No drone program should be permitted to resume unless specific binding documentation requirements are restored to Chapter 43.5, backed by consequences for non-compliance.

GUARANTEE TRANSPARENCY MOVING FORWARD

Require complete, public, regular reporting on every deployment, including the reason for the flight, the authorizing supervisor, and any outcomes.