

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS / Drones) Annual Report - 2025

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. [Chapter 43.5 ¶55].

Key definitions

Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC) - The individual with the final authority and responsibility for operation and safety of a sUAS operation.

Unmanned Aircraft - An aircraft that is operated without direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft. Also called remote piloted aircraft or drones.

Introduction

It is the policy of the New Orleans Police Department that small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS, a.k.a. drones) are deployed only for specific public safety missions, in compliance with all applicable laws, and only by trained and authorized personnel. NOPD's drone program is governed by NOPD policy Chapter 43.5 - Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS / Drones), found at nola.gov/next/nopd/topics/policies.

In 2025, NOPD used drones to assist with police incidents and special events. NOPD's drone program was supervised by the 8th District Captain and the Special Operations Division Assistant Commander.

This report summarizes the data that is automatically recorded for every drone flight as well as the pilots' responses to the post flight form. The data is stored in SkyDio's cloud data service. NOPD's drone vendor is SkyDio.

Drone Flight Summary Data

In 2025, NOPD drone pilots made 916 flights. The average (mean) flight duration was 19 minutes and the maximum was 34 minutes. Most flights were between 25-29 minutes. The table below lists the number of flights by five-minute flight duration intervals.

Flight Duration (Mins)	#
<5	92
5-9	116
10-14	92
15-19	95

Flight Duration (Mins)	#
20-24	136
25-29	353
30+	32

NOPD had 10 Remote Pilot's in Command (RPICs, a.k.a. drone pilots) in 2025. Most flights were operated by four pilots, all of which had the rank of Senior Police Officer. Two of which were assigned to the Investigations Support Bureau, and the other two were assigned to the Special Operations Division. The pilots' name, rank, assignment, and number of flights in descending order are in the table below.

Name	Rank	Assignment	Flights
Buckel, Nicholas	SPO	Investigations & Support Bureau, Special Investigation Division, Narcotics Section	164
Aucoin, Ryan	SPO	Investigations & Support Bureau, Homicide Division	163
Mc gee, Stephen	SPO	Field Operation Bureau, Special Operations Division, Motorcycle Second Platoon	156
Sartain, Michael	SPO	Field Operation Bureau, Special Operations Division, Canine Section	127
Ogden, Sean	SPO	Public Integrity Bureau, Special Investigations Division	85
Koen, Ricky	SPO	Field Operations Bureau, 8th District, Bourbon Promenade	82
Elsensohn, Keith	SPO	Field Operations Bureau, Special Operations Division, Tactical Section	62
Jefferson, Joseph	SPO	Investigations & Support Bureau, Homicide Division	52
Prepetit, Kenny	LT	Field Operations Bureau, Special Operations Division, Tactical Section	2
King, Danatus	SPO	Field Operations Bureau, Special Operations Division, Driving While Intoxicated Unit	1

The most common take-off location was in the French Quarter. The top ten take-off locations are in the table below.

Take-off Address	Count
519 Chartres Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130	300
1530 Saint Charles Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130	60
2800 Sixth Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70115	40
1615 Poydras Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70112	32
4700 Michoud Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70129	27
1410 Annunciation Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130	26

Take-off Address	Count
550 Fulton Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130	16
1522 Saint Charles Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130	12
2408 Florida Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana 70117	10
100 Basin Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70112	10

After completing a drone flight pilots can document an incident type in the SkyDio application. Pilots can make multiple selections for each flight. The table below lists the top five incident types documented in 2025.

Type of Incident	Flights
Non-operational (i.e. training flight)	53
Dispatch call for service	32
Dispatch call for service, Event overwatch	19
Event overwatch	9
Barricade Check	2

After completing a drone flight, pilots can document whether the drone arrived on scene before officers. The pilot's responses are in the table below. Based on the responses, it appears drones can often get to the scene before an officer.

Did the drone get to the scene first?	#
Yes	42
No	23

Pilots can also indicate whether they were able to clear the call without needing officers on scene. The pilots' responses are in the table below. Based on the response, it appears drones can clear calls without an in-person officer, but most of the time they cannot.

Did the drone clear the call without patrol resources?	#
Yes	8
No	57

Pilots can also indicate how the drone assisted with the call. Below are the pilots' responses in descending order. The most common response for 2025 drone flights was that the drone provided overwatch.

How did the drone assist with the call?	#
Provided overwatch	48
Located person	24

How did the drone assist with the call?	#
Other	9
Located vehicle	6
Helped make arrest	1