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Lee County Public Safety to add autonomous drones to help safeguard the public and first responders

Fort Myers, FL, Oct. 7, 2025 – The Lee Board of County Commissioners voted Tuesday to leverage additional drone technology to enhance efforts to ensure public safety by approving the purchase of four autonomous drones to be based across Lee County. The purchase of secure docks for these four drones will be brought forward for Board consideration in the next 60 days.

The Skydio X10 drone provides Lee County Public Safety with fast, reliable aerial support for emergencies, improving responder safety and decision-making ability. Its thermal and zoom cameras help assess disaster damage and monitor large incidents such as post-hurricane search and rescue, while autonomous obstacle avoidance allows safe operation in complex environments.

This equipment was used during Hurricane Milton in 2024, livestreaming conditions to the Emergency Operations Center the morning after the storm's impact. This live view helped expedite the response to conditions on barrier islands, reducing the time to reopen roadways and restore access.

Lee County Public Safety already has one Skydio drone based at the Lee County Public Safety Center on Ortiz Avenue, and six other drones deployed in vehicles across the county. The docked drone can immediately be launched as first responders are being dispatched, allowing them to have a bird's eye view of the emergency before they arrive. Drones in vehicles can be deployed by any first responder and remotely operated from the Public Safety Center.

In addition to uses in Public Safety, the drones can be used for aerial surveying for departments like Solid Waste and Parks and Recreation. The technology can also be used for 3D imaging of infrastructure, such as county facilities, radio towers, bridges and water control structures.

The purchase approved Tuesday is for about \$136,000, and commissioners also approved seeking up to \$100,000 in reimbursement from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

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