Aboveground Storage Tanks/Unmanned Aircraft Systems: Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality Approves Drones for Visual Inspections



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The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality ("LDEQ") issued a May 21st news release stating that it has approved the use of unmanned aircraft systems (i.e., "drones") to conduct visual inspections of aboveground storage tanks ("ASTs").

Such inspections are stated to be required by LAC 33:III.2103.D.2.e.

A number of state environmental agencies (including Arkansas) have utilized drones for various purposes for a number of years. For example, an Environmental Council of the States report notes that state environmental agencies have used drones to undertake activities such as:

- Surveillance.
- Enforcement.
- Permit support documentation.
- Waste and landfill inspections.
- Illegal dumping of chemicals, oils, or waste tires.
- General emergency response functions including at facility discharges, train derailments, truck accidents, and oil spills.
- Investigation of unusual events.

The same report indicates agencies use drones because of their ability to:

- Quickly obtain data.
- Provide more effective response to emergencies.
- Ensure worker safety.
- Improve environmental results.

The LDEQ news release states that its use of drones to inspect ASTs will:

…significantly reduce inspection costs for industry while improving their safety and efficiency.

Further, LDEQ states that drone technology utilized in semiannual AST inspections has the potential to save Louisiana's regulated community an estimated $4 million annually by reducing the need for

traditional methods such as scaffolding, cranes or manned access equipment. Therefore, worker risk and more timely identification response to environmental concerns is accomplished.

LDEQ recommends that all unmanned aircraft used for regulatory inspections meet specific standards to ensure:

- Image clarity.
- Secure operation.

The United States Department of Defense Blue UAS list for enhanced cybersecurity is cited.

The news release also provides specifications for which the drones should meet or exceed.

A copy of the news release can be downloaded here.