

A charging box for Skydio 2 drones could attract business users

October 18 2019, by Nancy Cohen



Credit: Skydio

Skydio 2 Dock is from the company with the same name, Skydio. The company showed a [video](#) of it on Wednesday. They said in the video notes that "We look forward to partnering with our first customers and regulators to roll this product out responsibly. If you believe your drone program could benefit from a Skydio 2 Dock, please get in touch with us."

It is a self-contained charging [base station](#) for the Skydio 2 drone. [The Verge](#) described it as "a motorized charging box to make its self-flying drone truly autonomous."

[SlashGear](#) said it was "basically the idea of a plug-and-play deployment."

The Skydio 2 Dock will recharge the drone in about one hour, The drone is then ready to go again, [said IEEE Spectrum](#), for a 23-minute flight.

So, who would use it, and why? A worksite that could use mapping or inspections would show interest.

Haye Kesteloo at *DroneDJ* [said](#) the box could sit outside the person's construction lot, mining operation, or landfill, with the Skydio 2 flying autonomous missions regularly to map the location and provide updates on the progress of the building, the stockpiles, or speed at which you're filling up the landfill.

"In reality," he added, "there are some regulatory hurdles that will need to be overcome first." Such as? "Under the current FAA regulations, it is illegal to fly a drone beyond-visual-line-of-sight (BVLOS) without a special waiver. How this will impact Skydio's ability to sell the Skydio 2 Dock and for its customers to start using the Skydio 2 Dock for regular drone missions is unclear."

DRONELIFE similarly observed that "Fully autonomous flights are still widely restricted by industry regulators. But this could be a significant step and is worth keeping an eye on."

Evan Ackerman in *IEEE Spectrum* recognized the autonomy appeal may have for business users, considering the dock was a home base "that a Skydio 2 drone can snuggle up inside to relax and recharge in between autonomous missions, meaning that you can set it up almost anywhere

and get true long-term full autonomy from your drone."

"Of course, persistent operations also open up new regulatory questions," Skydio wrote in [Medium](#) on Wednesday.

Ackerman in *IEEE Spectrum* quoted CEO Adam Bry, who said, "Under current regulations a Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) waiver would be required... Our general view is that it's our responsibility to establish that the system satisfies all relevant safety and logistical concerns, and work with regulators to roll this technology out responsibly."

The company made its case for why the new box could be a boost for enterprise use of drones. Think "Persistent operations," because those two words have enormous importance for drone uses. "Persistent operations offer the possibility of increasing drone program ROI ten-fold. As drones gain the ability to constantly work in the background, entirely new use cases become possible."

According to notes for the Skydio's [video](#), the enterprise has a use for a drone capable of fully automated data collection.

Their dock solution fits in a carry-on suitcase. The setup takes minutes.

Malek Murison in *DRONELIFE* offered some background to the company's drone. "Earlier this month the highly anticipated Skydio 2 landed," he [wrote](#), with "unmatched computer vision, an improved camera, longer flight time, a crash guarantee, and a cheaper opening price than the original."

Murison also described how it works: "The Dock opens and closes like a CD changer using robotic actuation, and the drone finds its way home using visual fiducials, so it's not dependent on GPS." The slide-out arm

in the video is for the drone's landing.

Sean Hollister in *The Verge* noted the built-in charging station "for a special version of the Skydio 2's battery with contact pins on the bottom."

The Verge said the [drone](#) can find its way back to the box without GPS, "thanks to its visual and inertial navigation systems." What is more, "it can land precisely on that pad time after time, thanks to a pair of visual markers on top."

At the time of this writing, there was no word on pricing for the dock.

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