



[www.stopthechopnynj.org](http://www.stopthechopnynj.org)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### General Information

**Who is Stop the Chop NY/NJ and what is our mission?** We are a 501c3 all-volunteer nonprofit organization with a mission to ban nonessential helicopters from flying over the NY metropolitan area. We educate the public on the negative impacts of nonessential helicopter flights in our region, and the role of [federal](#), [state](#), and [local](#) legislation to ban tourist and commuter helicopters, regulate helicopter traffic, collect data, and reduce helicopter noise levels.

Accordingly, we seek the closure of the NYC owned heliports (E. 34th Street & Downtown Heliport) to nonessential helicopter companies, as well as the NY Hudson River Park Trust owned heliport at W. 30th Street.

**What are the main types of noisy helicopter flights in and around New York City?** It may surprise you to learn that the vast majority of helicopter flights in and around New York City are deemed "nonessential" – tourist, commuter, and charter flights. The police, medical services, news organizations, etc., do use helicopters in their operations, but these flights are outnumbered by nonessential flights by orders of magnitude.

**What is deemed a “nonessential” helicopter?** Nonessential helicopters are tourist, commuter, charter/corporate, and non-professional photographer.

**What is NOT a nonessential helicopter?** Military, emergency services, police, medical, government, news & media.

**How many nonessential helicopter flights are there?** Nearly 30,000 tourist flights take off from NYC's [Downtown Heliport](#), operated by the [NYC EDC](#), each year. Other tourist flights take off from nearby heliports in New Jersey, such as in Kearny and Linden.

Blade and other commuter operators now fly dozens of charter flights per day between the regional airports (JFK, LGA, Newark, Teterboro) and other destinations, such as the Hamptons, from [W 30th St heliport](#) (owned by the Hudson River Park Trust) and the [E 34th St Heliport](#) operated by NYC EDC.

A significant reduction in or ban of nonessential helicopter flights in the NYC area would enormously reduce helicopter noise and pollution issues throughout the region.

**What can be done to "stop the chop?"** The optimal solution would be [federal legislation](#) closing the NYC region's airspace to nonessential helicopter traffic. Walt Disney World, for example, was granted just such a restriction by Congress following the September 11, 2001 attacks. Current FAA regulations regarding helicopters otherwise permit them to fly essentially anywhere, at any time (see below for more information).

[New York State](#), [New Jersey](#), and [New York City](#) legislation to close the heliports primarily responsible for nonessential flights would also be immediately effective. In 2016, New York City implemented restrictions to hours and routes of tourist flights from the Downtown Heliport, largely thanks to Stop the Chop's efforts.

## **Flight Information**

**Who are the individuals/companies flying these flights?** In the NYC region, tourist (HeliNY, FlyNYON, etc.) and charter/commuter (Blade, etc.) helicopter flights account for the vast majority of all helicopter traffic over the area. Essential flights are far less common and STC's mission does not pertain to essential flights. See the next few questions for specifics.

**Which nonessential helicopter flights fly over Manhattan/NY harbor?** A combination of tourist and commuter/charter flights fly over Manhattan (including Central Park) and the NY harbor. See more information about each category below.

**Which nonessential flights flyover Brooklyn, Queens, & Long Island?** Nearly all flights passing over populous areas of Brooklyn, Queens, and Long Island are charter & commuter helicopter flights to/from JFK airport and other destinations. Blade is the largest operator of these flights. [More information here...](#)

**Where do tourist helicopters fly?** Tourist flights emanate either from the city-owned heliport at [Downtown Heliport](#), operated by [NYC EDC](#), or from other heliports in New Jersey and Westchester. Most of these flights pass over the NY harbor and up and down the Hudson and East rivers. Certain city-level regulations are in place for *tourist flights* originating at the NYC heliports (see 2016 Agreement below), but these regulations do not apply to flights from outside NYC. Non-NYC based tourist helicopters can tour anywhere, including over Central Park, the Empire State Building, and the Brooklyn Bridge, to name a few common sights.

STC supports [legislation in the NYC Council](#) that would mandate the city halt use of its heliports for nonessential use.

NYC taxpayers pay to fund the maintenance of these heliports that are hosting these noisy and polluting fossil fuel-based helicopters.

**How are charter flights responsible? Where do they fly?** A growing number of companies, of which the largest is currently Blade, now offer commuter/charter helicopter services to/from the region's airports and other destinations. Many of these flights use the [W 30th St Heliport](#), part of the Hudson River Park and jointly controlled by the city and New York State. Some also use the city-owned [E. 34th St Heliport](#). A significant number of these flights pass back and forth over densely-populated areas of [Brooklyn](#), as well as over the NY harbor and up the Hudson River to the heliport.

STC supports [state legislation](#) to mandate the closure of the W 30th St heliport to nonessential operations, or otherwise outright.

**Aren't NYPD helicopters responsible for a large number of flights?** The NYPD does use helicopters in its operations, but the vast majority of flights over the NY area are not police flights and are nonessential. STC NY/NJ's mission does not pertain to police helicopter use.

**How can one know what types of helicopters are flying overhead?** Use the free [ADS-B Exchange](#) site, and download the free app Flightradar24 – they track helicopter tail numbers, make & model, owners, flight paths, heliport departure & arrival locations, flight altitudes. You can screenshot that information and share photos on social media and helicopter complaint forms, such as [NYC 311](#). Our website has a PDF that lists tail number owners and agencies flying those helicopters.

**What is the environmental impact of helicopter flights?** Use of a helicopter produces anywhere from 20-40x the emissions of a private automobile. In addition to planet-warming CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, helicopter flights also generate other forms of air pollution. [More information about the environmental and health impacts of nonessential helicopter flights is available here.](#)

## **Rules & Regulations**

**Aren't helicopters banned from flying over NYC land or on Sundays (2016 Agreement)?** The Sunday ban and corresponding limited tourist flight hours, a compromise agreement with NYC won by Stop the Chop in 2016, only applies to tourist helicopters originating from the NYC-owned heliport at the [Downtown Heliport \(DMH\)](#) near Wall St. It does not apply to tourist flights from NJ or Westchester etc., or to any commuter/charter flights.

Currently, tourist flights from this heliport may fly Monday-Saturday, 9am-7pm, and must follow a prescribed route. Tourist flights from other heliports are not bound by this restriction.

Thanks to STC's efforts, the hours for tourist flights from DMH will be reduced to 10am-5pm, Monday-Saturday, when a new heliport operator is awarded the concession agreement.

**What FAA regulations apply to helicopters?** Helicopters may legally fly nearly anywhere as long as they respect visual flight rules (avoiding obstacles and other aircraft). The FAA prescribes certain helicopter routes over the NYC area; operators are "strongly encouraged" to follow them but are not required to in most cases. [More information about these routes is available here \(see "Digital Downloads"\)](#).

We also encourage everyone to [file noise and safety complaints about helicopter flights with the FAA](#).

**What legislative actions can be taken to reduce helicopter flights?** There are [local](#), [state](#), and [federal](#) legislative efforts to reduce nonessential helicopter flights over the NYC region. Stop the Chop NY/NJ supports passage of such bills.

## **About Us**

### **Why is STC NY/NJ trying to ban nonessential helicopters from the NY metro airspace?**

There are many reasons: *environmental* (they use excessive fossil fuel for small number of passengers); *safety* (high risks of crashes & already over 30 serious or deadly crashes in our densely populated area); *security* (risk of terrorist hijacking); *noise* (excessive noise pollution creates bodily & emotional harm, and reduces cognitive abilities); *economic* (reduces property values under flight paths, externalizes environmental pollution costs to society, medical visits due to crashes, noise exposure cost taxpayers, emergency services costs of crashes, lost worker productivity time due to noise & crashes).

### **How can I get updates about or help with STC NY/NJ's efforts?**

[Sign up for our mailing list](#)! We send regular updates with the latest. We also have several [petitions](#) to encourage lawmakers to act. If you have time to spare we are always looking for volunteers to help us with various events, flyering, etc.; [you can contact us here](#). We gratefully [accept tax-deductible donations](#).

**In NYC:** [write to your NYC council member](#) and tell them you support legislation to ban nonessential helicopter flights at city heliports.

**In New York State:** write to your [state assembly member](#) and [state senator](#) and let them know you support legislation to tax nonessential flights and to close the W 30th St heliport.

## **Further Questions**

**Why can't helicopters fly higher to reduce noise?** The FAA bans them from flying above 2,000 feet to prevent crashes with airplanes.

**Is there a minimum height ban over land or buildings?** No. In fact helicopters are often limited in how

high they can fly because of the large number of commercial airplanes from LaGuardia, JFK, and Newark.

**Does the FAA have rules around low flying aircraft? How does a citizen alert the FAA if low flying aircraft are in the area?** [Read more...](#)

**What are the nonessential helicopter companies currently flying over the NY metro area, and from where do they take off?** There are basically 2 categories of nonessential helicopters: tourist & commuter. NYC based *tourist* helicopters are restricted to the Downtown Heliport. Corporate/charter flights operate out of all 3 heliports, but mainly use the East 34th and West 30th Street Heliports. Both tourists & commuters fly to and from Kearny and Linden NJ, Westchester County Airport, various airports in the Hamptons, and the Port Authority owned airports (LaGuardia, JFK, & Newark).

**Where are the tourist helicopter companies based & where are they currently allowed to fly/tour/take aerial photos?**

- In NYC, *tourist* helicopters are only allowed to fly from the Downtown Heliport (M-Sat 9am-7pm only; Sundays no tourist flights are allowed) and those tourist flights are only allowed to fly over waterways (e.g., Hudson River, East River and NY Harbor). This is the result of the 2016 Agreement between NYC and the helicopter industry; not an FAA rule. See <https://stopthechopnynj.org/local-legislation/>
- In NJ, *tourist* companies are based at two heliports: Linden (city owned) & Kearny (privately owned). FlyNYON (the doors off “shoe selfie” aerial photography company) is primarily based in Kearny, NJ. Because the FAA regulates airspace (and generally has preemption over local governments desiring to regulate air traffic), there are NO restrictions as to where they can fly (excluding TFRs – temporary flight restrictions).

**Where are the NYC commuter/charter helicopter companies based & where are they currently allowed to fly on their commutes?**

- Commuter/charter companies based in NYC fly out of all 3 heliports: Blade & others fly out of the W. 30th Street (M-Sun hours appear unrestricted), and the E. 34th Street (M-F 8am –8 pm) heliports. Fly Lindy & others are based at the Downtown Heliport (M-F 7am-10pm, Sat 7am-7pm, Sun 7am-5pm)
- Commuters/charters can and do fly over land and parks, such as Central Park, Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, and residential neighborhoods.

**Where do the commuter/charter helicopter companies fly to?** Companies such as Blade fly to the 3 major NY/NJ airports, Westchester County Airport, Hamptons & other L.I. destinations. Fly Lindy, started in June 2021, will fly to Baltimore & DC. Private charters can fly to any destination.

**What type of fuel do helicopters use?** [Read more...](#)

**Why does STC NY/NJ need donations?** We need funds to maintain our website, publish materials, produce hats, buttons, signs, and t-shirts. We also hope to fund research studies, and to hire part-time

staff to assist with tech support, volunteer organizing, and marketing. We would like to be able to afford legal and/or government relations for our sister 501c4: [Stop The Chop Advocacy Fund](#).

**Why can't cities just ban them?** The FAA prohibits localities from regulating their airspace. NYC can exert some control over its heliports, but even that may be limited by the FAA.

**Why isn't Stop the Chop NY/NJ trying to ban NYPD or news helicopters?** This would make our efforts to succeed politically impossible. These flights are a very small percentage of the number of helicopters over NYC each day. Media has 1st Amendment rights. We hope the news media will pool their helicopter video footage as Gale Brewer's Manhattan Borough President "Helicopter Task Force" was encouraging. The NYPD can be regulated by the executive and legislative branches.

**Aren't electric helicopters coming soon?** Not so soon, as they have not been approved by the FAA. Even if they do receive approval, imagine flying vehicles noisier and larger than drones flying overhead. Safety & security risks remain.

**What if helicopter noise does not bother you?** Whether you realize it or not, your body evolved to respond to noises. Noise triggers a "flight or fright" response that releases harmful stress hormones and increases your blood pressure. Exposure to excessive noise has been linked to cardiac and endocrine disorders.

**How can you help?** 1) Sign up for our newsletter 2) Sign our petition 3) Volunteer to build our coalition, help us flyer & table 4) Donate \$ 5) Contact our electeds at all levels 6) Send in 311 & FAA Safety complaints once a week or once a month 7) Follow us on social media 8) Offer specialized skills towards us achieving our goals 9) Translate our materials in Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish 10) Outreach to organizations, schools, parents' groups, etc. 11) Spread the word!

**Links to the above action steps are on our website:** [www.stopthechopnynj.org](http://www.stopthechopnynj.org)

**Who do I contact to get involved:** Email us at [info@stopthechopnynj.org](mailto:info@stopthechopnynj.org)

#### **NY Anti-Helicopter Advocacy Victories:**

- 2025 - NYC Council passes Intro 26-A, a bill that prohibits non-essential helicopter flights from city-owned heliports unless they meet the most stringent noise standards.
- 2024 - Reduced hours for tourist flights and formed a new contract at the Downtown Heliport
- 2021 - NYC stopped NYC & Company, NYC's tourist office, from promoting helicopter flights.
- 2016 - Stop the Chop NY/NJ and other advocates force a 50% reduction in number of tourist flights allowed from the Downtown Heliport from 60,000 to 30,000, and eliminated Sunday tourist flights.
- 2016 - Helicopters are required to observe maximum idling times.
- 2012 - FAA mandates the NY North Shore Helicopter Route requiring over water route after political pressure.
- 2010 - Industry agrees that all tourist flights originating in Manhattan will not fly over Central

Park, Governors Island, or Brooklyn. They will not do fly-bys of the Empire State Building.

- 2010 - Tourist flights are eliminated from East 30th Street Heliport.
- 2010 - No short (<20 minute) tourist flights allowed.
- 2005 lawsuit - Tourist flights are eliminated from West 30th Street Heliport.
- 1997 - East 34th Street Heliport eliminates all flights on Saturday or Sunday.
- 1997 - East 34th Street Heliport restricts hours of operation to 8am-8pm.
- 1997 - Mayor Giuliani closes East 60th Street Heliport.
- 1977 - Closed heliport on roof of Pan Am (Met Life) Building.

\*\*\*\*\* In 2003, Disney Corporation succeeded in getting Congress to pass a law establishing a 3-mile no-fly zone around Disney World and Disneyland. ***NYC deserves no less!***