Disinfecting drones will clean Atlanta stadium between events

Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium, home of the Atlanta Falcons and Atlanta United FC, will use a pair of drones to disinfect fan seating and other areas after upcoming events. The purpose-built D1 disinfecting drones are being provided by Lucid Drone Technologies, and use electrostatic spraying nozzles to distribute the non-toxic disinfecting chemicals. The drones will debut after the Falcons' upcoming October 11th home game against the Carolina Panthers.

The stadium claims it's the first professional sports stadium to use cleaning drones, and it says they reduce the time it takes to clean the stadium's seating area by 95 percent, freeing up staff to work elsewhere. The drones will also disinfect the stadium's handrails and glass partitions. Two drones will be used, with a third to be used as a backup, *ESPN* reports.

The stadium claims its drones reduce cleaning times by 95 percent

As the world has reckoned with how to re-open public spaces amidst a global pandemic, remote cleaning solutions like these have emerged as a high profile way of disinfecting large areas efficiently, while being able to keep cleaning staff socially distanced from one another. In May, Pittsburgh's airport rolled out a UV-cleaning robot, and disinfecting robots have also been deployed to a containment zone in Chennai, India.

But an excessive focus on disinfecting surfaces has been criticized as "hygiene theater" by some experts in a recent report in *The Atlantic*. That's because while the *CDC* says surface transmission is "possible" it "isn't thought to be the

main way the virus spreads.” Instead, airborne transmission is thought to be a much bigger problem, making social distancing and mask-wearing more important policies for cutting down transmission.

The drones will spray seating areas, handrails, and glass partitions.
Image: Mercedes-Benz Stadium
Disinfecting areas isn’t thought to be directly harmful, but hygiene theater risks creating a false sense of security, *The Atlantic* reports. In some cases it may also suck resources away from other areas.

Thankfully it sounds like the disinfecting drones won’t be the only hygiene policy in place at the 71,000 seater Mercedes-Benz Stadium. *CNN* reports that capacity will be limited, although it says it’s unclear exactly how many fans will be allowed to attend, and there will also be 600 hand sanitizing dispensers around the building. Officials at the Atlanta Falcons’ parent company AMBSE have previously indicated that face coverings will be mandatory if fans returned to games this year, and that the stadium will enforce a six-feet distancing rule between seated groups, *AJC* reports.

https://www.theverge.com/2020/10/2/21498362/atlanta-mercedes-benz-stadium-falcons-united-nfl-mls-coronavirus-covid-19-disinfection