

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | August 13, 2019

North Dakota Highway Patrol receives Federal Waiver to fly drones over people

The North Dakota Highway Patrol announced today that the agency received a four-year waiver from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to operate drones/Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) over people. The FAA approved the Highway Patrol's waiver as part of the North Dakota Department of Transportation's UAS Integration Pilot Program.

The North Dakota Highway Patrol will be the first state highway patrol agency in the United States to receive this type of waiver, which enables them to routinely conduct UAS operations over people using a drone – in this case a DJI Mavic 2 series equipped with a ParaZero SafeAir parachute recovery system.

“The NDDOT works with the Highway Patrol in many ways, and this will help us by adding another element of safety through UAS operations in North Dakota,” says Russ Buchholz, UAS program administrator for NDDOT's Integration Pilot Program.

“This waiver will allow North Dakota Highway Patrol troopers the option to safely photograph, measure, and document complicated crash scenes,” says Col. Brandon Solberg, Highway Patrol superintendent. “Traditional methods of working on crash scenes and gathering evidence require troopers to block off roadways and stand in lanes of travel, which can cause delays for motorists and unnecessary risk to emergency personnel.”

This waiver will also provide an additional tool for the Highway Patrol's search and rescue operations. Deployment of drones can be a useful method in locating missing persons and/or fleeing suspects in rural or rough terrain.

The Highway Patrol plans to purchase and implement this technology in the near future.

North Dakota's UAS Integration Pilot Program gives state, local and tribal governments a chance to establish innovation zones for testing complex UAS operations.

“The collaboration between the NDDOT and the Northern Plains UAS Test Site brings two innovative organizations together that can best serve the State of North Dakota's UAS interests, provide an environment for industry to achieve their goals, and support the FAA with UAS integration initiatives,” says Trevor Woods, director of safety at the test site.

The State of North Dakota is a leader in transportation and UAS advancement. The UAS Integration Pilot Program technology will enhance North Dakota in many areas such as pipeline or infrastructure inspections, traffic crash reconstruction, and emergency response during a life-threatening event in



rural areas, such as finding a missing person in the Badlands or on lakes and rivers. For more information on North Dakota's UAS Integration Pilot Program visit our webpage at www.dot.nd.gov/uas/

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