



News Release

April 10, 2018

Contact:

Laura Maher, Strategic Communications Manager

Phone: 779-348-7331

E-mail: Laura.Maher@rockfordil.gov

Rockford Police Department now using Unmanned Aircraft Systems to Help Community and Officer Safety

ROCKFORD, Ill. – The Rockford Police Department will begin using Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), commonly referred to as drones, to benefit the community and enhance officer safety.

The new drones, which were donated by Illinois Drone-One, Inc., will be used to speed up the investigation of serious and fatal vehicle crash scenes. Traditionally, roads are closed for hours after serious accidents so photographs and measurements can be taken. By using drones to capture video and photographs, the data can be downloaded into software which will provide to-scale measurements in a much shorter time frame than traditional investigation methods.

“We will still need to close roads to examine evidence at the scene,” says John Pozzi, Assistant Deputy Chief with the Rockford Police Department. “However, the drones will reduce the process by several hours.”

The use of drones for crash investigation will reduce demand for police resources. Reduced time of road closures will allow police resources to be freed up to respond to other calls for services. Additionally, drivers will benefit as traffic congestion for major crashes will be reduced.

Other uses for the new drones will include large crime scene mapping and aerial security and intelligence during critical incidents.

Operations of the drones are governed by the Federal Aviation Administration, and all of the department’s pilots are FAA Part 107 certified. The Rockford Police Department holds an FAA waiver which allows for low light or night time operations and includes additional safety precautions. Staff is working with the Rockford International Airport to coordinate safe flights in the airspace throughout the City.

The Rockford Police Department policy and procedure for use of the drones mirrors that of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The department also must follow the Illinois Compiled Statutes regarding the Illinois Freedom from Drone Surveillance Act.

###

Note to the Media: We are offering a drone demonstration on Wednesday, April 11, at 10 a.m. at District 3.