

## Ten news organizations join drone-test program

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A sign hangs on the outside of the Washington Post building on August 6, 2013 in Washington, DC

Ten US media organizations including the New York Times and Washington Post announced a coalition Thursday to test drones for news gathering in collaboration with Virginia Tech University.

The initiative is "designed to conduct controlled safety testing of a series

of real-life scenarios where the news media could use small UAS (unmanned aircraft systems) technology to gather the news," according to a statement from the media coalition.

Virginia Tech is among a small number of institutions authorized to conduct testing on various civilian applications for drones as the US Federal Aviation considers rules for these systems.

Some drones going onto the market are designed as toys, while others have various applications for industries or agriculture, and online retailer Amazon wants to use drones for deliveries.

Cable news giant CNN said this week it would conduct tests on drone use with Georgia Tech University.

Rose Mooney of Virginia Tech said the collaboration with the news organizations could lead to "a safe, efficient, timely and affordable way to gather and disseminate information and keep journalists out of harm's way."

The coalition includes Advance Publications, A.H. Belo Corp., the Associated Press, Gannett Co, Getty Images, NBCUniversal, E.W. Scripps Company and Sinclair Broadcast Group.

The coalition has been working since mid-2014 to develop the testing procedures with Virginia Tech.

Outside the news media, several video production and aerial photo companies have asked for federal permission to use civilian drones

A number of public agencies have been authorized to fly drones for public service purposes, such as for security, rescue or weather forecasting.

In contrast to other countries, the United States has banned commercial use of civilian drones, except at low altitudes, while it develops strict regulations.

According to drone makers, allowing civilian drones to fly in US airspace could lead to the creation of 100,000 jobs and inject \$82 billion into the economy.

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