

Researchers to begin work with news organizations in an effort to advance aerial journalism

February 5 2015, by John David Pastor



Virginia Tech pilots flew this unmanned aircraft during a search-and-rescue mission near Charlottesville in October, 2014, marking what may be the first use of such a craft for law enforcement purposes in Virginia. Credit: Albemarle County Police Department.

Leaders with the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership at Virginia Tech

have outlined a research plan to study how reporters could use unmanned aircraft to gather news.

Last week, the 11th member joined a coalition of news organizations partnering with Virginia Tech to research real-life scenarios where reporters could use small unmanned aircraft.

Advance Publications Inc., A.H. Belo Corp., the Associated Press, Fusion, Gannett Co. Inc., Getty Images, NBCUniversal, The E.W. Scripps Company, The New York Times Co., Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc., and The Washington Post are united in the research.

"This coalition represents significant media organizations, leaders of the industry," said Rose Mooney, executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership at the Institute of Critical Technology and Applied Science at Virginia Tech. "Working together, we have a way forward toward the development of legitimate, commercial uses of the technology."

Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership leaders say they will work with users and the Federal Aviation Administration to determine equipment and training needs.

During the course of the research, classroom training will be followed by hands-on instruction, during which media representatives will be trained to fly their aircraft.

Research flights will begin in isolated, rural areas and progress through semi-urban and urban areas.

Pending FAA approval, the effort may create a path for [news organizations](#) to receive a Section 333 exemption, which allows for unmanned systems operations to begin while the larger, regulatory

framework for unmanned aircraft is still being worked out.

"Newsgathering operations were the first to contact us to find ways to take advantage of [unmanned aircraft systems](#) technologies," said Jon Greene, the acting associate director of the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership and an associate director of the Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science. "Our role is to be an honest broker for the Federal Aviation Administration, to make sure we're doing things safely."

The Federal Aviation Administration selected Virginia Tech in December, 2013, as one of six national test programs to conduct research to integrate [unmanned aircraft](#) into the nation's airspace.

Provided by Virginia Tech

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