For first time, drone delivers package to residential area (Update)

March 25 2016, by Scott Sonner

In this Friday, March 25, 2016, photo provided by Flirtey, an independent drone delivery company, shows the first fully autonomous, FAA-approved urban drone delivery, a box with bottled water, emergency food and a first aid kit in a

residential setting without the help of a human to manually steer it in Hawthorne, Nev. Flirtey CEO Matt Sweeney announced Friday the six-rotor drone flew itself about one-half mile and lowered the package outside a vacant residence in Hawthorne, about 140 miles southeast of Reno. (Flirtey via AP)

A drone has successfully delivered a package to a residential location in a small Nevada town in what its maker and the governor of the state said Friday was the first fully autonomous urban drone delivery in the U.S.

Flirtey CEO Matt Sweeney said the six-rotor drone flew about a half-mile along a pre-programmed delivery route on March 10 and lowered the package outside a vacant residence in an uninhabited area of Hawthorne, southeast of Reno.

The route was established using GPS. A pilot and visual observers were on standby during the flight but weren't needed, Sweeney said.

He said the package included bottled water, food and a first-aid kit.

"Conducting the first drone delivery in an urban setting is a major achievement, taking us closer to the day that drones make regular deliveries to your front doorstep," Sweeney said.

Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval congratulated the company "on successfully completing the nation's first fully autonomous urban package delivery."

"I am thrilled that Flirtey is not only testing its cutting-edge technology in Nevada, but also creating jobs through its headquarters relocation to Reno," Sandoval said in a statement.

NASA is working with the drone industry and the Federal Aviation Administration on a low-altitude air traffic control system to prevent crashes involving drones and other low-altitude aircraft.

In this July 17, 2015, file photo, a Flirtey drone flies above the Wise County Fairgrounds while lowering a package of prescription medication at the Remote Area Medical (RAM) clinic in Wise County, Va. Flirtey CEO Matt Sweeney announced Friday, March 25, 2016, that a similar six-rotor fully autonomous, FAA-approved urban drone delivery, flew itself about one-half mile and lowered the package outside a vacant residence in Hawthorne, about 140 miles southeast of Reno, Nev. (Tim C Cox/The Bristol Herald-Courier via AP, File)

Flirtey conducted the first FAA-approved, rural drone delivery in July to a rural health care clinic in Virginia.

The Nevada delivery demonstrates that advanced drone systems allow aerial vehicles to safely navigate around buildings and deliver packages with precision within a populated area, Sweeney said.

The company recently moved its headquarters from Australia to Nevada. It said the recent delivery was filmed for an upcoming ABC-TV documentary.

Hawthorne, a town of about 3,000 residents, is the home of the Hawthorne Army Depot.

Flirtey has been conducting research and development through a partnership with the Nevada Advanced Autonomous Systems Innovation Center at the University of Nevada, Reno. Nevada is one of six states the FAA has designated as unmanned aircraft systems test sites.

"This was by far one of the most successful (unmanned aircraft systems) operations we ran and represents an advanced level of test and development ... by Flirtey," said Chris Walach, director of operations for the FAA-designated Nevada site.

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