

UPS Is Testing Drone Deliveries, And It's Just As Cool As You'd Hope

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The drones are coming, and they're bearing good things.

UPS released video this week of its first completed test delivery by drone. The company said it hopes this will be a major liftoff in changing its day-to-day operations.

The video [posted to YouTube](#) Tuesday shows the top of one of the company's brown delivery trucks in Florida sliding open to reveal a launch pad.

The truck's driver then activates the drone from inside, causing the device to lift off to a predetermined location. After dropping off the package, the drone returns to the truck, which is now in another location, and docks on its own.

Using drones can improve deliveries to rural destinations that would otherwise require more time to reach, UPS said.

"Imagine a triangular delivery route where the stops are miles apart by road," said Mark Wallace, UPS senior vice president of global engineering and sustainability, [in a release](#).

"Sending a drone from a package car to make just one of those deliveries can reduce costly miles driven. This is a big step toward bolstering efficiency in our network and reducing our emissions at the same time," he said.

UPS estimated that reducing just one mile for each driver per day would save the company \$50 million per year. The drones would also free up the drivers to perform other tasks, as the delivery drone's developer pointed out.

"It's wonderful to see this technology applied in such a practical way," said Stephen Burns, whose company, Workhorse, designed the octocopter drone that's seen in the video. "The drone is fully autonomous. It doesn't require a pilot. So the delivery driver is free to make other deliveries while the drone is away."

Amazon and Google have also taken strides in using drones for delivery.

Amazon's system, [called Prime Air](#), can carry packages up to 5 pounds, according to the company's website. UPS's current ability, [according to its release](#), is up to 10 pounds. Both companies' drones can fly for up to 30 minutes at a time.

Project Wing, which is an initiative of Google's parent company, Alphabet Inc., has meanwhile [shown success in flying burritos to customers](#).

John Dodero, vice president of industrial engineering at UPS, declined in [an interview with Reuters](#), to say whether the drones could one day replace human workers.

"We have no idea how all that will play out until we find out how to integrate them into the business," he told the news agency.

"UPS is never looking to replace our UPS drivers," Dodero said, while calling the employees "the face of our company."