

Drones coming special delivery in 2018

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TORONTO - It's a bird, it's a plane — it's a drone delivering your pizza.

The postal service is so passe, according to Drone Delivery Canada, a new Toronto-based company that is perfecting technology for its fleet of drones to deliver local packages. While its CEO Tony Di Benedetto said drones will deliver consumer goods initially, sending

medicine or defibrillators to people who need them in emergencies could be a future option. They're aiming for a January 2018 launch.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Say you're ordering a pizza. The company deploys a fleet of these drones to the pizza place. The person ordering the pizza online clicks on a "delivery by drone" option and the drone is then dispatched with the food, which is monitored by Drone Delivery Canada's "mission control" HQ. The hungry customer can track the robot on his or her smartphone. When the food arrives, the drone doesn't touch down but instead hovers. A picture is taken to confirm delivery.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Green technology, a "direct flight path" means no ground traffic jams for drones to get from point A to B, drones travel at just over 100 km/h and have battery power for round trips 30-40 minutes long.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE DRONE DIES MID-AIR?

“If this thing drops from out of the sky, the unit is engineered with fail safes in mind, so everything is redundant,” Di Benedetto said. “In the event that some sort of error has happened, it will land immediately to a safe location. It’s part of the engineering process of the technology we’ve been working on.”

HOW MANY DRONES ARE WE TALKING ABOUT HERE?

From 1,500 to 2,000. The service will likely start off in the rural areas and then work its way to more urbanized areas. The maximum weight these drones can carry are 6.8-kilograms (15 pounds) per package.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

People who use the service to deliver: \$5 to \$10. Drones cost in the multiple of thousands of dollars each.

WHAT DO THE LEGISLATORS SAY?

Transport Canada says anyone using a drone for commercial use must apply for special certificate. With it comes restrictions and requirements, including maximum allowed altitude and “staying minimum distances from people, buildings and airports.” Di Benedetto said legislation is moving quicker here in Canada, thanks to U.S. companies such as Amazon and Wal-Mart, which want similar delivery using drones.