



Orange County Government  
Office of County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus  
**NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release  
June 23, 2017

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**Orange County Emergency Services will use drones to assist during  
certain emergencies**

*Drones to be dispatched primarily in search-and-rescue missions, finding missing persons and responding to fires and hazardous-material spills*

Goshen, N.Y. – Orange County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus has announced that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), commonly known as drones, will be used by the County’s Emergency Services Department to assist with certain emergencies.

“We anticipate using our UAV in a variety of emergency situations,” Neuhaus said. “This drone will be beneficial to our residents and in some situations it might help save lives. Drones can assist first responders to quickly gain situational awareness of a scene. We’re excited to use this important technology and Emergency Services will continue to be proactive about using modern technology to enhance public safety.”

Neuhaus joined the County’s Commissioner of Emergency Services, Brendan Casey, and Deputy Commissioner of Emergency Services Alan Mack for a demonstration of the capabilities of a drone in the 911 Center parking lot on Friday.

According to Casey, the Federal Aviation Administration-approved UAV’s will be used primarily in search-and-rescue missions, responding to fires and hazardous-material spills/incidents, storm/disaster mitigation and evaluation, and other emergency situations.

Orange County pursued using drones, Casey said, after a CSX freight train carrying sulfuric acid and other hazardous materials derailed in Newburgh in March.

The County had facilitated a Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP) full-scale exercise simulating a rail emergency involving the transportation of Bakken crude oil five months earlier at SUNY Orange's Newburgh campus. That drill helped prepare first responders and officials for the CSX accident and enabled them to coordinate effectively during the incident.

“Firemen were sent into potentially dangerous areas to look for leaks after the train in Newburgh derailed,” Casey said. “The UAV program will allow us to send drones into hazardous areas such as these. We are very excited about this initiative and we will continue to seek new and innovative ways to keep Orange County residents safe.”

Mack, a licensed UAV operator, will oversee the County's UAV program. Mack retired from the U.S. Army last year after a decorated 35-year career as a helicopter pilot. He was one of the first pilots to fly into Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, bringing in a Special Forces unit to battle the Taliban during the start of the engagement. He spent his last three years in the Army as the Commander of the United States Military Academy's Flight Detachment at Stewart International Airport in Newburgh, overseeing many search-and-rescue and missions and aerial firefighting.

Mack has worked closely with Rockland County's Emergency Services in developing Orange County's UAV plan.

“Rockland County has been very helpful in sharing tips and lessons-learned on industry best practices and techniques for using UAV's,” Mack said. “FAA regulations and laws are evolving very quickly and I will be responsible for keeping tabs on the changes and trends to ensure we operate safely, efficiently, and in good faith. The drones will be a valuable tool in many emergency situations and we are eager to put this program into practice.”

For more information, contact Justin Rodriguez, Assistant to the County Executive for Communications and Media Relations at 845.291.3255 or [jrodriguez@orangecountygov.com](mailto:jrodriguez@orangecountygov.com).

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*Commissioner of Emergency Services Brendan Casey, Orange County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus and Deputy Commissioner of Emergency Services Alan Mack with the County's drone after a demonstration on Friday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>*



*Mack operates the drone on Friday*



*The drone on display*