



## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# Walmart Uses Drones to Fly COVID-19 Tests to American Homes

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Walmart has begun using **drone** aircraft to transport COVID-19 tests to private homes in the United States.

This week, the company began sending COVID-19 self-collection **kits** to homes in the North Las Vegas area of Nevada. Walmart will fly the kits to single-family houses within 1.5 kilometers of its stores. The drones will leave the test equipment on the front sidewalk, driveway, or land around the house.

People wishing to receive the tests are asked to first [create a request with the company online](#). The kits enable individuals to administer the COVID-19 test themselves. A **swab** is included for people to collect fluid from inside the nose. Individuals can then send the collected material in the mail to a COVID-19 testing center.

Walmart says **customers** who use the service will not have to pay for the kits or use of the drones. The service will be offered daily so long as weather conditions permit drone flights.

The project is a partnership between Walmart and Quest Diagnostics, a medical testing laboratory. U.S. drone services provider DroneUp is supplying the aircraft.

Dan Haemmerle is head of Extended Care services for Quest Diagnostics. He says the new project aims to show how drones can provide healthcare services to patients who are unable to leave their home or live in rural areas.

“We will take the learnings from this pilot and **enhance** the ways we deliver health care services to the patients we serve,” Haemmerle said.

Walmart said it hopes the project “will shape contactless testing **capabilities** on a larger scale” and lead to future expansion of the company’s delivery methods.

Earlier this month, Walmart launched another test program. It uses drones to fly food and household products to customers in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

The company expanded its **pick-up** and **delivery** services in recent months as demand increased because of the coronavirus health crisis.

Tom Ward is Walmart’s senior vice-president for customer products. In announcing the program, he said it will likely take years before customers will see widespread drone deliveries. “We know that it will be some time before we see millions of **packages** delivered via drone. That still feels like a bit of science fiction.”

Ward added, “We’re at a point where we’re learning more and more about the technology that is available and how we can use it to make our customers’ lives easier.”

Online seller Amazon recently received U.S. government approval to deliver products by drone. But the company is still testing its self-piloting aircraft and has yet to announce a target date for launching ongoing drone deliveries.

Alphabet’s drone company Wing received federal approval last year to fly drone aircraft. It has also tested deliveries of medicine and other products.

And, UPS Flight Forward received approval from the Federal Aviation Administration last year to operate as the first U.S. “air carrier” with drone delivery services.

I’m Bryan Lynn.

*Bryan Lynn wrote this story for VOA Learning English, based on reports from The Associated Press, Reuters and Walmart. George Grow was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**drone** – *n.* an unmanned aircraft

**kit** – *n.* equipment or materials needed for a special purpose

**swab** – *n.* a small piece of material used to collect a small amount of a substance from a person's body

**customer** – *n.* a person who pays a business for goods or services

**enhance** – *v.* to improve

**capability** – *n.* the ability to do something

**pick-up** – *adj.* the act of going to a business to get things that were bought

**delivery** – *n.* the taking of things from one place to another

**package** – *n.* a box or large envelope that is sent or delivered usually through the mail or by another delivery service