

New drone could halve the time to chart serious collisions



By Brock Weir

The newest piece in York Regional Police's arsenal in serving the community took to the sky with a buzz on Friday afternoon as the local department launched their first unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) at their Aurora headquarters.

The new apparatus, commonly referred to as a drone, is a high-tech vehicle that will greatly assist in mapping out the scenes of serious and fatal collisions, getting the job done in a fraction of the time it would normally take to complete an investigation, allowing police to clear the roads quicker and get traffic moving once again.

The Aeryon Sky Ranger UAV needs two trained operators to safely navigate over a scene ? one officer to steer the vehicle from a tablet and the other to handle the imaging.

Now fully deployed, the drone has also assisted in performing security sweeps of York Region's Pan Am venues and has the potential to also lend a hand in search and rescue operations.

?We have been working on acquiring this particular tool over the past two years,? said Superintendent Karen Noakes. ?This [particular model] offers a lot of flexibility, the ability to withstand higher winds versus some other models. The priority piece is for the major collision investigations unit and the reconstruction of accident scenes. It is a great opportunity to have a true aerial overview of an accident scene and to be able to reconstruct that. As we get more familiar with this tool, we hope it will lessen the time that we have to shut down our roads in order to do proper investigations.?

According to Constable Andy Pattenden, investigations such as these can see roads closed for up to 10 hours, with most of the time spent on complex mapping. By flying over top of the scene, the drone can capture high resolution images that can help those on the ground map the scene.

?It opens up the roads in half the time,? he said.