

Google-linked firm wins US approval for drone deliveries

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US Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao said the approval marked an 'important step' for the integration of drones into the US economy

Wing Aviation, a firm owned by Google parent Alphabet, on Tuesday became the first drone operator to be certified as an airline by US

authorities, allowing it to begin commercial deliveries in the country.

A number of companies have been testing [drone delivery](#) systems around the world for everything from food delivery to crop spraying as they aim to win over regulators and the public amid concerns about safety, [noise pollution](#), privacy and collisions with other aircraft.

The Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) certification paves the way for Wing Aviation to start delivering a variety of small items like food and medicine to customers using its drones after they place orders using an app.

"This is an important step forward for the safe testing and integration of drones into our economy," said US Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao, in an FAA statement on the approval.

"Safety continues to be our Number One priority as this technology continues to develop and realize its full potential."

As drones increasingly crowd the skies in many parts of the world, regulators have been pushed to formulate rules—for everyone from hobbyists to commercial delivery services.

This is the second major approval for Wing, which has been testing its drones in the United States, Finland and Australia.

Earlier this month, after trials for a year and a half, Australian authorities gave it the green light to start delivering small items such as food and over-the-counter pharmacy items to residents of the capital Canberra.

But Wing's drones in Australia must be piloted and not autonomous.

In a statement after the approval, Wing claimed its data showed "that a delivery by Wing carries a lower risk to pedestrians than the same trip made by car," and that it had carried out more than 70,000 test flights and 3,000 deliveries in Australia.

The company said it will now reach out to communities and businesses in Blacksburg and nearby Christiansburg in Virginia—where it has been allowed to operate—for feedback, aiming to launch a delivery trial later this year.

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