

Amazon starts delivering medications by drone in Texas city

October 19 2023, by Matt Day, Bloomberg News



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Amazon.com Inc. laid out plans to expand its still-experimental drone delivery effort, announcing the start of sending prescription medication by air and promising to start flights in Britain and Italy by late 2024.

The [online retailer](#) recently began listing [drone delivery](#) as an option for Amazon Pharmacy customers in a test program in College Station, Texas, one of two U.S. cities where Amazon is delivering products using its unmanned, riding-lawnmower-sized vehicles.

At a press event held at a warehouse near Amazon's Seattle headquarters, David Carbon, a vice president who leads the Prime Air program, said the company would expand its [drone](#) delivery tests to a third U.S. city, as well as locations in Britain and Italy. The sites will be announced "in the coming months," Carbon said.

Quick delivery of medical supplies has emerged as one of the leading candidates for a viable delivery-by-drone business. Alphabet Inc.'s Wing, United Parcel Service Inc. and drone startup Zipline have all set out to deliver medical goods through unmanned vehicle, sometimes in trial programs centered around hospital campuses or planned communities. In most places, drone use remains limited in narrow tests as regulators hash out rules to limit risk to other aircraft and people on the ground.

John Love, vice president of Amazon Pharmacy, said the company is offering free delivery of more than 500 medications by air to patients enrolled in the drone-delivery test in Texas. When Amazon's Prime Air group surveyed customers to ask what products they'd like to receive this way, medication "was at the top of the list," he said in an interview.

Medications come in small packages and are often needed quickly, so would likely be a popular option for drone delivery if widely available, Love said. "There are a lot of reasons that this could be really powerful, and something that scales," he said.

Amazon's drone program, announced to the world by Jeff Bezos in 2013, has been beset by [technical challenges](#), high turnover and safety concerns after crashes at a testing site. The group was among the Amazon units

that suffered layoffs early this year, CNBC reported at the time. A spokesperson said Amazon has made "thousands" of deliveries so far in College Station and Lockeford, California—where it has its other U.S. drone trial—since launching its first deliveries in December 2022.

The company aims to deliver the medications by drone in less than an hour, and received a license to operate a pharmacy from an address near its College Station drone testing facility in May, Texas State Board of Pharmacy records show.

Carbon said Amazon's latest drone design, the MK30, had its first test flight in September. The drone is lighter and can fly farther than the MK27 vehicles the Federal Aviation Administration authorized to operate in Amazon's current tests.

He said the company's drone delivery program will begin moving away from specialized Prime Air facilities, and integrate with the company's growing network of same-day delivery stations.

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Citation: Amazon starts delivering medications by drone in Texas city (2023, October 19) retrieved 2 May 2024 from

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