



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

## Olds Fire Department to Test Drone Technology to Enhance Emergency Response

**April 29, 2024 Olds** –The Olds Fire Department has been invited to participate in a University of Alberta pilot study exploring the effectiveness of drone usage in emergency response scenarios. By utilizing visual and thermal video of the scene, drone technology will be able to quickly evaluate the extent and severity of an emergency, providing first responders with valuable information to help them determine the necessary equipment and personnel to be deployed. Traditionally, emergency responders have faced challenges in rapidly assessing the scope and nature of emergencies, especially in situations where access may be limited or hazardous.

The Olds Fire Department personnel have received comprehensive pilot training to ensure they are proficient at flying the drone. In the event of an emergency the drone will be deployed and flown in a straight flight path to the incident scene. Equipped with advanced camera systems and real-time monitoring capabilities, the drone will provide firefighters with a bird's-eye view of the emergency scene. This aerial perspective allows responders to quickly evaluate a situation, identify potential hazards, and formulate the most effective response strategy. All footage captured by the drone will be used solely by the University of Alberta study and is protected from any public release or unauthorized access. The drone will not be recording during its flight to or from the incident location, only while it is observing the location of the incident.

Citizens of Olds may see or hear drone activity in the community as the drone scouts out the situation before crews arrive. The goal of this project is to create more efficient, effective and safer response to emergency situations in our region. This is an incredible opportunity for the Town of Olds to improve response capabilities in rural communities by working within Transport Canada's guidance and approvals as this type of drone use is not currently authorized in Canada. There are no other entities in Canada currently working with Federal regulatory bodies to change this legislation, making this a very important pilot project. If successful, this project could see changes occurring across the country in respect to drone usage during emergency responses.



## NEWS RELEASE

Justin Andrew, Protective Services Director for the Town of Olds, hopes that this pilot project with the University of Alberta will provide valuable insight into enhancing emergency response services.

“Aerial drones can cover a wider area in a shorter amount of time, enabling faster deployment,” explains Director Andrew. “Having a full understanding of an emergency situation and any visible dangers at the scene allows our team to respond safely and effectively.”

“We are thankful for the opportunity to partner with the University of Alberta on this unique pilot project to explore how we can enhance emergency management, improve response times, and enable efficient and effective deployment of equipment and personnel to an emergency.”

The Olds Fire Department remains dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of residents, and the integration of drone technology is a testament to this commitment.

**Media Contact:**

Jillian Toellner

*Supervisor – Engagement & Communications*

Town of Olds

[communications@olds.ca](mailto:communications@olds.ca)

403-507-4857