CLARE SKIES AHEAD FOR BEACH LIFEGUARDS

An Irish software start-up has teamed up with Clare County Council to boost lifeguarding operations by trialling the use of drone technology, which will be deployed as automated beach patrols for the first time ever in Ireland.

This unique partnership will see DroneSAR (the developers of a new drone search and rescue app) combine their expertise to allow lifeguards to quickly deploy drones as their first response to monitor those in distress.

DroneSAR's flight-planning software allows drones to scan large areas from above, reduce risk to search and rescue personnel, shorten search times, and ultimately save lives. It can live-stream high-resolution images and video back to incident control room. The location of the person or persons in distress can also be identified with GPS co-ordinates, and shared instantaneously with search-and-rescue (SAR) teams on the ground via SMS or email.

In a recent study in Sweden, it took a 14-strong lifeguard team an average of 4 minutes 34 seconds to search and locate a manikin in a 100m by 100m area. In stark contrast, it only took the drone team, comprising one pilot and lifeguard, an average of 47 seconds to search the same area.

Clare McGrath, Water Safety Development Officer with Clare County Council, said: "Our lifeguards are tasked with quick response times and do so over large distances. Fast detection is crucial in the Drowning Chain of Survival.

"DroneSAR's flight management technology, will deliver key operational advantages for our counties beach lifeguard operations by enabling them to quickly search for missing, injured or get early notification of people in distress. Any piece of

A drone pictured outside the lifeguard hut at Spanish Point.

equipment that will allow a quicker dispatch time for ambulances, medical assistance and increased beach patrols will be a huge advantage."

MEETING DRONE REGULATIONS

The new partnership will equip lifeguards in Spanish Point beach with the most modern drone technology and the DroneSAR software. DroneSAR will provide the drones and Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) drone instructors to supervise the drone flights in the early stages. Drones will be flown within the bounds of the IAA drone regulations.

A live-video downlink will enable the search pattern of each drone to be monitored by the lifeguard from the lifeguard hut. The Water Safety Development Officer can use the live browser secure link to remotely monitor search progress from any computer or laptop.

Oisin McGrath, DroneSAR CEO, said: "Lifeguard teams using DroneSAR will now be able to monitor live footage from the furthest reaches of their patrol areas, with instant access to call emergency services should the need arise.

"Drones can now be viewed as airborne lifeguards who cover large amounts of ground quickly and easily. As a past beach lifeguard, I am extremely excited about the endless possibilities that these trials will bring to the world of beach patrols."

DroneSAR's new drone software enables DJI drones with a range of rescue functions. The team is composed of military flight instructors, an app designer and a mountain rescue team leader. Together they have developed this software to reduce risk, save time and increase operational effectiveness of rescue teams worldwide. For more information visit www.dronesarpilot.com