

Kroger has announced a pilot autonomous drone grocery delivery program through a partnership with Drone Express, a division of TELEGRID Technologies.

Residents in two Ohio cities - Cincinnati and Monroe - will be able to place orders of small groceries and other items that weigh up to 5 pounds (2.2kg).

"Kroger's new drone delivery pilot is part of the evolution of our rapidly growing and innovative e-commerce business - which includes pickup, delivery, and ship and reached more than \$10 billion in sales in 2020," said Kroger's Jody Kalmbach, group vice president of product experience.

"The pilot reinforces the importance of flexibility and immediacy to customers, powered by modern, cost-effective, and efficient last-mile solutions. We're excited to test drone delivery and gain insights that will inform expansion plans as well as future customer solutions."

Kroger says the drone grocery delivery pilot will offer customers "unparalleled flexibility" as Drone Express technology allows package delivery to the location of a customer's smartphone not only to a street address, simply meaning a customer will be able to order delivery of picnic supplies to a park, sunscreen to the beach, or condiments to a backyard cookout, for instance.

Kroger is designing bundled product offerings ideal for meeting customer needs within the current weight limits for drone delivery, which is about five pounds.

"Autonomous drones have unlimited potential to improve everyday life, and our technology opens the way to safe, secure, environmentally friendly deliveries for Kroger customers," said Beth Flippo, Chief Technology Officer, TELEGRID.

"The possibilities for customers are endless - we can enable Kroger customers to send chicken soup to a sick friend or get fast delivery of olive oil if they run out while cooking dinner."

Drone Express will commence test flights this week near the Kroger Marketplace in Centerville, Ohio (1095 South Main Street). The flights will be managed by licensed Drone Express pilots from an on-site trailer with additional off-site monitoring.

Customer deliveries are scheduled to begin later this spring, and a second pilot is scheduled to launch this summer at a Ralphs store in California.