Coronavirus News: Pandemic drone launches in Westport to measure crowds, fever

Video Link: https://abc7ny.com/draganfly-drones-coronavirus-westport/6119813/

WESTPORT, Connecticut (WABC) -- Amid the coronavirus outbreak, people could soon be monitoring health activity from up above. New technology is launching that uses pandemic drones to help monitor everything from social distancing to heart rates.

Seven On Your Side Investigators first told you about the technology last week, but now, a local community is launching it in the town of Westport, Connecticut, as part of a pilot program.

You'll find the drone hovering about popular places in the town, like parks and grocery stores. It can measure whether people are social distancing.

"There shouldn't be a police chief or anybody who's sitting in my seat right now with everything that's going on, not looking for a way to do things differently," Westport Police Chief Foti Koskinas said.

The police department is taking part in in the project to use the technology to make sure people are keeping their distance

"If you're scanning an area and you see that problem exists, that might be an area where you might want to put more resources at," Koskinas said.

The drones are also equipped with technology that can help determine everything from breathing patterns, to heart rate, to fever. It's technology the town is testing out to see how it works.

"I'm absolutely very sensitive to privacy issues," Koskinas said.
Privacy is a concern for the New York Civil Liberties Union, which released a statement saying, in part, that pandemic drones should be "scientifically justified, communicated transparently to the public, limited in their scope and duration, and should always require informed consent."

Cameron Chell, the CEO of Draganfly, the Canadian based company behind the technology, said it isn't designed to identify people, but patterns.

"The system is designed to basically provide health monitoring data and be able to give us better data, but make more clear decision," he said.

Westport is a town that has experienced a spread of the virus and is located in a county that has more than 40% of the positive cases in Connecticut.

"The technology's there, but there's a lot of variables," Koskinas said. "This is where it has to prove itself before we move to the next step."