

# GRAND FORKS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

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**SHERIFF ROBERT W ROST**

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April 15, 2016

## **Northeast Region Unmanned Aircraft Systems Unit Receives FAA Authorization for Nationwide Flights**

On April 14, 2016 the Northeast Region Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Unit received Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) authorization to conduct UAS operations nationwide. The Northeast Region UAS Unit is the first agency in North Dakota, and one of the first in the nation, to receive nationwide flight authorization. Previously, the Unit had FAA authorization to fly within 17 North Dakota Counties and 1 Minnesota County. The FAA refers to the nationwide authorization as a "Blanket Certificate of Authorization (COA)." The Blanket COA will enable the Northeast Region UAS Unit to respond to requests for assistance from any public safety agency, regardless of the location of that agency.

The Northeast Region UAS Unit was established in 2011 and became fully operational in 2013. The Grand Forks County Sheriff's Department is the Unit's coordinating agency. The Unit consists of members from the Grand Forks County Sheriff's Department; Grand Forks Police Department; East Grand Forks Police Department; University of North Dakota Police Department; and the Cass County Sheriff's Department.

Since 2013, the Unit has responded to 27 calls for service including evidence collection at 4 homicide scenes, searches for victims and suspects, and documentation of disaster scenes.

Enquiries regarding this press release may be directed to Lt. BJ Maxson at (701) 780-8280 or UAS Unit Chief Pilot Dep. Alan Frazier at (701) 777-2959.

Sheriff Robert Rost  
Grand Forks County Sheriff's Department