

## Amazon Preps Drone Retail

Written by Marco Attard  
04 December 2013

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Unmanned flying robots, what are they good for? The military controversially uses them in military hotspots, others find use as spies or mere toys-- now Amazon plans to use drones as a deluxe means of shipping parcels to "Prime Air" customers.



Revealed by CEO Jeff Bezos on CBS TV show 60 Minutes, the drones (or octocopters for the technically minded) can carry up to 5 pounds (2.3kg) in weight for up to 10 miles (16km) from what Amazon likes to call "fulfillment centres."

Amazon also promises Prime Air packages will make it to the grubby hands of lazy, brick-and-mortar-avoiding customers in 30 minutes or less.

Of course using of flying robots can be problematic in all but the most laissez-faire of nations-- not only do such machines need to know where and when and how to land, the retailer needs to cut through plenty of regulatory red tape before it gets approval from US authorities, never mind the European Union.

"I know it can't be before 2015, because that's the earliest we could get the rules from the FAA," Bezos says. "My guess is that's, that's probably a little optimistic. But could it be, you know, 4, 5 years? I think so. It will work, and it will happen, and it's gonna be a lot of fun."

However once it gets approval Amazon hopes "Prime Air vehicles will be as normal as seeing mail trucks on the road today."

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Actually Amazon might be able to test out drone-powered retail in at least one continent-- Australia, where textbook rental startup Zookal is already set to be the first retailer making use of unmanned flying robots from 2014. Down Under is one of the few countries allowing commercial drone activity, and according to Zookal is "uniquely placed to create a new drone industry and shape the development of regulations in this space."

However, don't hold your breath for the EU reaching agreement over such novel delivery methods any time soon. Perhaps... that's for the best.

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