



*Earl Nottingham, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department/AP*

Game warden Brandon Rose deploys a camera-equipped drone Jan. 25 near Austin that was donated to the department for use by Texas game wardens. It is the first Parks & Wildlife drone dedicated to search and rescue.

# TPWD bases new drone in Temple

**BY CODY WEEMS**

*TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER*

There's a new eye in the sky — right here in the heart of Texas.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's new drone will be based at the agency's Temple office to assist with search and rescue operations across the state.

The drone, a DJI Inspire 2, was donated through the department's Gear Up for Game Wardens program, which has generated more than \$100,000 in private donations for purchases of specialized equipment.

The Temple region requested and was the first area to be supplied with a drone.

"We've been trying to get an

unmanned aircraft system started for the past several years. During Hurricane Harvey when game wardens rescued 12,000 people, I think that was the pushing point that helped us request one," Lt. Game Warden Brandon Rose said.

Waco-based Game Warden Capt. Jason Campbell said the device will be useful for flooding events such as Harvey and the Wimberley floods of 2015.

"Many of the rescues in both of these events were highly technical and presented an above-average danger to the victims and wardens involved," Campbell said in a release. "The Unmanned Air System will equip our warden first responders with the abil-

ity to identify dangers such as swift water, downed power lines and hazardous materials."

Rose said the drone will make it easier to conduct rescue missions in adverse conditions.

"We fly helicopters and airplanes doing tons of search and rescue work, but we are limited by weather and different things that could keep us from being able to go up and find somebody," Rose said. "With this thing, we could send it up from anywhere in the state and maybe find somebody a lot quicker. I think it's going to be a game changer for us."

He added that the drone will

**Please see DRONE, 3A**

# Drone

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Continued from 1A

be able to quickly identify people in need, eliminating the need for helicopters to aimlessly search.

“It will save a lot in fuel. If we send this thing up and find somebody hanging out of their window, we can send the manned helicopter out to hoist them out of there,” Rose said. “During Harvey, we were flying non-stop trying to look for people who needed help. With this, we can find people quicker and

easier than we could in a helicopter.”

The \$6,300 device has a maximum speed of 58 mph with a range of about four miles. It is equipped with a custom wrap similar to that of a game warden helicopter.

The equipped camera will deliver a live HD video feed.

“It’s got some pretty good zoom capability,” Rose said. “I think it will help us on search and rescue missions when we’re trying to find somebody.”

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