



Fresno County Sheriff – Coroner Office

Margaret Mims, Sheriff-Coroner

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News Release

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FSO Helicopter EAGLE One Almost Hits Drone

Around noon Wednesday, the crew of the FSO helicopter, EAGLE One, was traveling to Shaver Lake to survey snow levels when they encountered a dangerous situation. While flying near the intersection of Temperance and Shepherd in Clovis, at an altitude of 550 feet, the pilot saw something in the sky resembling a bird. As he flew closer, it appeared to be a small airplane. The pilot maneuvered out of its path and then saw the object fly over the top of the helicopter's rotor. It missed striking the rotor by only about 20 feet. The pilot elevated to 1,500 feet and began to orbit the area, looking for a person on the ground who was possibly operating the device. During this time, the crew determined that the flying object was a large drone. The tactical flight officer located a person below with a remote control. He turned on the helicopter's siren and used the speaker system to call out to the drone operator, ordering him to land the drone and stay where he was so the crew could contact him. The pilot safely landed in an open field. The air crew, along with a deputy in a patrol car, met with the drone operator and pointed out the dangerous situation he was causing. Deputies explained to him that if the drone would have struck the helicopter, it could have lead to the crew crashing and possibly cause major injuries or death.

It was determined that the operator had a camera on his drone and was taking pictures of the area. Potential violations are that he was flying at an altitude over 400 feet, not maintaining a clear distance from manned aircraft in the area and not having his drone registered through the

Federal Aviation Administration. Deputies are forwarding a report of this incident to the FAA and it will be up to that agency to determine if a fine or punishment is necessary.

The FAA has specific guidelines for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), more commonly known as drones. For further information on these rules and the registration process, please visit www.faa.gov