CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

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NASA COLLABORATES WITH CAL FIRE TO MITIGATE WILDFIRE DISASTERS

MOFFETT Field, Calif. - NASA Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif., has entered into a five-year Non-Reimbursable Space Act Agreement with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to use NASA technology and capabilities to help support the management and mitigation of wildfire disasters.

"The two entities have had an ad-hoc partnership for the last 25 years and this agreement formalizes our working relationship and allows the two agencies to explore new and exciting technology developments and capabilities that support the needs of the people of California," said Vince Ambrosia, NASA Ames principal investigator and senior scientist of the collaborative effort.

"CAL FIRE is proud to formalize its partnership with NASA," said Chief Ken Pimlott, director of CAL FIRE. "Under this agreement we will cooperatively explore the use and future transfer of advanced fire sensing technology. This in turn, will benefit the public we serve by helping CAL FIRE increase situational awareness and response efficiency."

NASA has developed an innovative visible, infrared and thermal sensor called the NASA Autonomous Modular Scanner (AMS). The scanner has operated on both NASA's Ikhana Predator B Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and the manned NASA B200 King Air both operated by the Dryden Flight Research Center at Edwards, Calif. The scanner provides real-time wildfire imaging data over large-scale disaster events in the western United States and particularly in California. The innovations include performing all processing on-board the aircraft autonomously and relaying the information through a satellite communications system to disaster managers located anywhere in the world.

The system performed flawlessly during several major wildfire events in southern California in 2007 and during the lightning fires in Northern California in 2008. Those missions were flown aboard the NASA Ikhana UAV. More recently, the team has focused on integration and operation of the sensor aboard the manned B200 King Air aircraft.

"The B200 has more rapid response capability than the Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. The exciting element is that we have the ability to use different platforms as the mission requirements change," Ambrosia said.

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