News Release

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MSU's Program of Distinction Learns How to Use the ASAP XP

On Thursday, February 4, faculty of Murray State University's Program of Distinction in Telecommunications Systems Management (TSM) met with employees of Sofcoast, Inc to do a test run on a device called ASAP (Affordable Stationary Aerial Platform) XP. The ASAP XP is a helium-filled, stationary aerial platform tethered to the ground used to carry a variety of communications, sensor, and surveillance equipment for emergency response.

Director of Operations, Sales and Marketing, LeAnn Jones said the ASAP can hold up to five pounds of equipment and float approximately 150 feet off the ground. There is a device connected to the aerial platform that automatically lets off heat to burn a hole in the balloon in case there is a loss of control of the ASAP, this method ensures that the aero stat will not float into unnecessary places. Jones said the ASAP XP is primarily made of ripstop nylon and polyethylene plastic.

Randall Winchester, Communications Researcher of Center for TSM, said the purpose of the afternoon was for Sofcoast employees to train TSM staff on the appropriate method to use the device. The test flight was just the first step in an ongoing collaboration between TSM and Sofcoast; both parties are getting ready to do pay load research, design and qualification. Winchester admits that the test run of this aerial platform was the first one done on this model. Previous models of the ASAP XP had been developed.

"The idea is to focus on more rural areas with this device. The intent is to be able to have a form of communications available when a disaster hits and perhaps radio towers are down and there is no other option," Winchester commented.

Snapshots from the camera onboard the ASAP XP proved the test run to be a success. TSM plans to experiment with radio repeaters attached to the balloon at a bicycle race scheduled on Feb. 27.

(Pictured on right) Randall Winchester, Communications Researcher for Center for TSM, is attaching a camera to send up in the ASAP.