



European GNSS Supervisory Authority

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

GSA awards Special Topic Prize at European Satellite Navigation Competition

The European GNSS Supervisory Authority (GSA) awarded a Special Topic Prize at the European Satellite Navigation Competition to a proposed system to rescue people who are lost overboard at sea.

The GSA awarded the prize to UK entrepreneurs Peter Hall and Christine Edwards for their proposal to develop a commercial 'Person Overboard' (POB) rescue system that uses EGNOS (European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service). Their proposal also won the Galileo Masters prize, the top award at the competition, and the United Kingdom/Ireland regional prize.

The two entrepreneurs have formed a company, Sci-Tech Systems, to develop the concept and bring it to the market. The GSA award provides them with the opportunity to develop their concept at an incubation centre of their choice for up to 12 months. The two have chosen the Hertfordshire Business Incubation Centre, in Hertfordshire, UK.

"Satellite navigation accuracy is crucial to what we want to do," Hall says. "EGNOS provides the kind of accuracy the product needs to be able to quickly locate people who have fallen overboard at sea."

EGNOS improves the accuracy of GPS, the US satellite navigation system, to within three metres. EGNOS is Europe's 'pre- Galileo' system, and is already providing GPS augmentation signals suitable for use in safety critical applications such as for aircraft or ship navigation.

Improving safety at sea

Hall and Edwards propose to develop a personal device that attaches to a crew member's clothing or safety jacket, along with a signal detection unit linked into a vessel's satellite navigation system.

If a crew member falls overboard, immersion in water will trigger the personal device, which will send out a radio signal containing real-time information about the POB's position. The ship unit will then detect that signal using the vessel's existing VHF radio, or internal receiver, and send out an audible and visual alarm to the crew. Using the signal in conjunction with a vessel's on board navigation system, the crew will be able to track and rescue the POB.

The POB system can be incorporated into a vessel's already existing equipment, making it affordable for everyone, including small boat owners. Hall estimates that the Sci-Tech Systems device will cost about €165, while a signal receiving unit on the vessel will cost about €250.

The Sci-Tech system could be used to increase the safety of those involved in all types of water sports, including close to shore activities such as kite-surfing and sailing lessons. The product could also be adapted for risky land-based group activities such as off-trail skiing and mountain climbing.

Award criteria

"In awarding the Special Topic Prize to Hall and Edwards the GSA considered the fact that Sci-Tech will use EGNOS to deliver a device that will enable a faster and more efficient search for a person overboard than is currently available, especially in difficult conditions such as rough seas and poor visibility," said Pedro Pedreira, Executive Director of the GSA, "the proposed system will make European seas safer and contribute to EU maritime policy. In addition, it will complement the future Galileo Search and Rescue (SAR) service, which is being developed."

The sponsorship of a Special Topic Award at the annual European Satellite Navigation Competition is part of the GSA's aim to foster new applications for EGNOS, and later for Galileo. The applications must provide economic and social benefit to Europeans and to European industry.

The GSA Special Topic Award was given on the basis of a number of criteria:

- Uniqueness and originality of the idea;
- Business potential (technical feasibility, commercial feasibility, size of market and time to market, credibility of the applicant);
- Contribution to success of EGNOS/Galileo programme in terms of exploiting EGNOS/Galileo unique features, promoting EGNOS/Galileo awareness and bringing EGNOS to new markets.

An idea from TeleConsult Austria GmbH to develop an Austrian EGNOS data server to improve the accuracy of the signal was ranked second in the GSA competition, while a system to provide real-time data traffic information to drivers, submitted by Mr. Dariusz Borowski, was ranked in third place.

Market development for EGNOS and Galileo

The GSA, a European Community agency, works with the European Commission on a range of market development activities aimed at helping European entrepreneurs and businesses – especially high tech small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), business incubators and related networks – commercially exploit EGNOS and Galileo. Such promotional activities will help ensure that European industry maintains a competitive edge in the global satellite navigation marketplace.

The European Satellite Navigation Competition

The European Satellite Navigation Competition is an annual international competition that awards the best ideas for innovative applications in the field of satellite navigation. Since its inception in 2004, the competition has grown from including three partner regions to 13 high-tech regions of Europe: Bavaria, Hesse, Baden-Württemberg, Nice / Sophia Antipolis, Prague, South Holland, Madrid, Lombardy, Great Britain, and this year's new regions, Queensland / Australia, Taipei / Taiwan, Lower Saxony, and North Rhine-Westphalia.

The goal of the ESNC is to continue to strengthen the international collaboration of these regions, particularly with regard to the development of applications and

services made possible by the European satellite navigation systems Galileo and EGNOS.

The Competition, which received a record number of entries in 2008, is carried out under the patronage of the Bavarian State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Infrastructure, Transport, and Technology with the support of the German Aerospace Center (DLR).

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Presentation: [Who are Sci-Tech systems?](#)