

AMERICA'S PROTECTORS

Help For Firefighters, Weather And Air Quality Forecasts

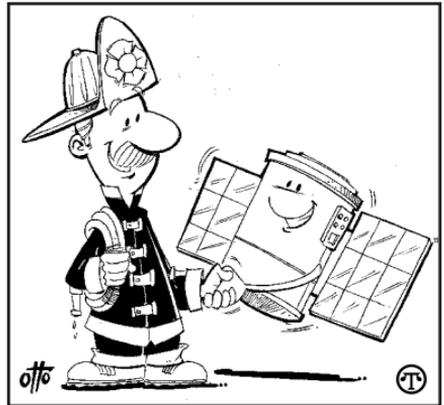
(NAPSA)—The government has found an ingenious new way to protect more Americans from fire, storms and pollution. Several federal agencies have teamed up with universities to develop new fire and smoke monitoring products. It's all under a program that uses satellites to get better weather and visibility forecasts, firefighting efforts and air quality predictions as smoke and fire events are happening.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Navy, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the University of Alabama developed these fire- and smoke-monitoring products.

Called the Fire Locating and Modeling of Burning Emissions (FLAMBE) project, it uses satellites that circle the globe while staying over a certain region and keeping up with the Earth's rotation to detect and monitor forest fire activity with updates every half hour.

Smoke production estimates based on the project data let meteorologists and other scientists provide early warnings of haze events downwind.

NASA is interested in the program because the agency hopes to be better able to understand global climate. The system lets NASA instantly estimate fire size



Out-of-this-world answer to Earthly troubles: A NASA satellite system can help firefighters, flyers and weather watchers predict where problems may arise in time to avoid them.

and temperature. That lets the scientists predict how much damage the smoke can do. Other government agencies expect it to help them better understand the global climate. "It can provide estimates of biomass burning particle emissions," explains Elaine Prins of NOAA.

It can also help firefighters estimate a fire's size and temperature and allows for early detection of rapidly growing fires, especially in remote areas.

You can view the system in action and learn more about it online at <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov>.