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MSU-led ASSURE identifying drone issues



James Poss

Carl Smith
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Unmanned aircraft, or drones, are expected to play a vital role in the future, but researchers must first figure out their impact before the technology is implemented and integrated into daily life.

Mississippi State University is at the core of this research and leads a consortium of universities, industries and government partners comprising ASSURE, the Alliance for System Safety of UAS (unmanned aircraft systems) through Research Excellence.

MSU was selected as a Center of Excellence for UAS by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in May.

ASSURE's executive director, retired Air Force Maj. Gen. James Poss, said the group is researching numerous topics, including the development of industry-derived standards, detect-and-avoid systems to increase flights beyond a spotter's line of sight, air-to-air and air-to-ground collisions and the effects of noise

pollution and turbulence, among others.

These topics are "exactly the right type of research we need to write safe rules and integrate UAS" into the airspace, he said to ASSURE representatives Tuesday.

Understanding these and other issues will help unlock what could become a \$100 billion industry, he said.

"What keeps you awake at night? Knowing there are things out there we don't know. What you're doing here is identifying those things we don't know," said Dennis Roberts, administrator for the FAA's southern region.

"We're involved with UAS in a way that we've never been involved in any other type of aeronautical activity before in the history of man. You're on the cutting edge," he added. "You're doing the work Orville and Wilbur (Wright) did in their bicycle shop when they launched powered flight many years ago."

ASSURE is comprised of 21 universities. Members are core to three FAA UAS test sites, lead four FAA research centers, have seven airfields and a fleet of 340 unmanned vehicles.

Mississippi-located industry and government partners include Aurora Flight Sciences, Mississippi Department of Transportation, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command, Naval Research Labs, Stark Aerospace and the Cirlot Agency.

Carl Smith covers Starkville and Oktibbeha County for The Dispatch. Follow him on Twitter @StarkDispatch

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