



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Technology Company Launches Airship Over New Mexico

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A technology company successfully test-launched one of its airships high above the New Mexico desert this week. The company, Sceye, hopes its airship will one day be able to improve internet connectivity and collect data on everything from industrial pollution to wildlife threats.

The airship launched on Tuesday. The test was meant to see whether the ship could reach the Earth's stratosphere and stay there for a long period of time. The stratosphere is the upper layer of the Earth's atmosphere. It begins around 11 kilometers above the Earth's surface and ends about 50 kilometers above the Earth's surface.

On Wednesday morning, Sceye announced the test was a success. The result means the company is closer to being able to reproduce and sell its airship technology.

The head of Sceye is Danish businessman Mikkel Vestergaard Frandsen. He started Sceye after the U.S. space agency, NASA, asked technology companies to think about ways to build an airship that could rise into the Earth's stratosphere and stay there for longer than eight hours. At the time of NASA's suggestion, no airship could remain in the stratosphere for longer than eight hours.

The researchers at NASA and the Jet Propulsion Lab in California said a ship that could stay in the stratosphere for a long period of time could provide important data for scientists.

Vestergaard Frandsen said he was pleased with the test. In a news release, he said the ship “holds extraordinary **potential** for stratospheric discovery.”

He said he believes the company's airships will be able to gather data on methane pollution, help get internet to parts of the world without it and look for wildfire threats.

He said he hopes the company's airships will be available for purchase in the next 18 to 24 months. It takes the company about eight months to build each ship.

Sceye's airship is made from special material that **reflects** the sun. It runs on **solar panels** and lithium-sulfur batteries. The ship is designed to carry heavy equipment.

The airship is filled with helium gas and does not have a crew. The ships can also carry heavy equipment.

Sceye is based in Roswell, New Mexico. One of the company's investors is New Mexico's Economic Development Department. Sceye is also working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and New Mexico's government to study air pollution and climate change.

David Kim is Sceye's chief technology officer. He called the successful test a "milestone moment."

I'm Dan Friedell.

Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on reporting by The Associated Press.

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Words in This Story

potential – *adj.* capable of becoming real

reflect – *v.* usually related to light hitting a surface and bouncing off and moving in another direction

solar panel – *n.* a large, flat, piece of equipment that uses the sun's light to create electricity