

Southwest Michigan Automation Company Develops New Technology with NASA:

Edgewater Automation announces that its Research, Test & Development division has a contract with NASA to provide services related to dynamic testing of the proposed Constellation launch vehicles (Ares I & Ares V) at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. These launch vehicles, currently under development, will replace the aging Space Shuttle.

Edgewater Automation specializes in designing and building custom assembly and test equipment. The Research, Test & Development division is an off chute of the parent company, and draws on the experience gained in designing custom equipment to assist companies involved in unique projects. With a focus on electro-mechanical devices, the RT&D division has a vast experience in taking an idea from concept to market as well as improving processes and products.

The dynamic tests of these new launch vehicles, in simple terms, will shake the rocket to aid in determining the vibratory characteristics in free-flight. In order to simulate free-flight during ground testing, the spacecraft must have the ability to move freely in six degrees-of-freedom. To do that, the launch vehicle, which weighs over two million pounds, will rest on Hydrodynamic Supports that act as giant free-moving springs.

Engineers at Edgewater RT&D are working with engineers at Marshall Space Flight Center to build a hydraulic power unit used to operate the Hydrodynamic Support System. The Hydrodynamic Support System was originally used for dynamic testing of the Saturn V rocket in the 1960's and the Space Shuttle in the 1970's. In fact, the original supports will be used in this latest generation test bed.

Edgewater Automation is thrilled to be involved in the US space program, and plans to continue to take on new challenging jobs in order to expand their versatility as builders of custom automation equipment.



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