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Australian Space Export Passes 0-g Flight Tests At NASA

Sydney, NSW
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Saber Astronautics, a space technology company in Sydney, recently passed NASA parabolic flight tests for a product that addresses the growing threat of “space junk”. The device, called the DragEN, unrolls a conductive space tether which uses the magnetic field of the Earth to gently drag an attached satellite back to Earth, clearing the area for new satellites.

The DragEN tests were selected for funding by NASA's Flight Opportunities Program, which is paying for its flight due to the agency's interest in maturing its technology. Zero-gravity tests were done on a modified Boeing 727-200 which flew on a roller coaster path, giving Saber Astronautics repeated stints of 30-seconds of weightlessness. During this time Saber used a 4-meter section of the aircraft to measure the speed and stability of the DragEN, to ensure that it will be safe to use in space.

Of the 21 experiments selected by NASA, the Saber Astronautics DragEN Tether Deployer was the only commercial product selected from outside the United States. The team completed 4 flights for a total of 46 zero gravity releases of the tether.

Saber Astronautics Director Dr Jason Held expressed his enthusiasm for DragEN's performance on flight. “The tether performed superbly—deployments and rollouts were smooth without any snags or deviations. This is important because most space tether deployment mechanisms suffer from snagging and many get stuck before they completely unroll. We are really happy with the consistency of tests and with how smoothly the yo-yo shaped deployer worked in zero-gravity.”

DragEN is due to launch with an Indian satellite from Manipal Institute of Technology in April 2014.

About Saber Astronautics

Saber Astronautics is an engineering company researching logistics and operations solutions for the space industry. Our mission is to reduce the barriers to space, making it more accessible to people on Earth. For more information, please visit www.saberastro.com

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