

NASA develops new airplane fire sensor

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NASA Wednesday announced the development of a new generation of fire detectors designed to significantly reduce the rate of false alarms aboard airliners.

Officials said the new detectors read a more complete fire signature so sensitive it might reduce false alarm rates to zero in airplane cargo and baggage compartments.

Most detectors sense smoke particles and can be fooled by dust and other tiny airborne particles found in an aircraft compartment.

The new sensor-based system was developed at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Glenn Research Center in Cleveland.

The research team came up with a new multi-sensor approach that compares various gas concentrations and smoke particle sizes to those values characteristic of an actual fire. The result is a system that effectively recognizes the presence of fire while screening out false alarms.

Before the new system can be installed on airplanes the sensors, software packaging and other components must be approved and certified by the Federal Aviation Administration.

NASA's Aviation Safety and Security Program sponsored the research as part of a joint NASA-FAA program. The research is also being looked at by spacecraft developers.

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