

NASA testing a 'clear view' for pilots

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NASA officials in Washington say they are working on a project to make flying safer by electronically giving pilots a clear view of their surroundings.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration technicians have equipped a Boeing 757 with sophisticated cockpit displays and radar equipment that give pilots electronic pictures of what's outside, regardless of weather or time of day.

The Synthetic Vision and Enhanced Vision Systems Airborne Research Integrated Experiments System is being flight tested over NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.

NASA said Synthetic Vision combines Global Positioning System satellite signals with an on board photo-realistic database to paint a picture of terrain for the crew.

"We've added new software to the X-band weather radar that's already on many airliners to produce a more detailed picture of what the radar would normally see," said Steve Harrah, Synthetic Vision sensors lead.

During the tests, pilots will fly the 757 with the forward-looking cockpit windows blocked, forcing the evaluation pilot to rely on the synthetic vision and enhanced vision displays.

If a problem develops, a safety pilot who always has an unobstructed view will assume control of the aircraft.

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