

Orbitec gets piece of five-year NASA contract

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Madison-based Orbital Technologies Corp. (Orbitec) is one of five companies nationwide to be awarded a piece of a five-year contract worth a total of up to \$50 million to develop space propulsion systems for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

CEO Eric Rice on Wednesday said he didn't know how much of the \$50 million his company could receive, noting it depended on how work was parceled out over the years. He said each of the companies was guaranteed at least \$30,000 worth of work supporting research and technology development activities at NASA's Glenn Research Center in Cleveland.

The work will be aimed at development of advanced space propulsion technologies to enable missions with higher performance, reduced cost and improved reliability and safety, a NASA news release said.

Rice said he assembled a team of small and large businesses and universities throughout the nation to help conduct his piece of the propulsion work. Orbitec's Martin Chiaverini will be project manager.

The other companies selected for the NASA contract — Aerojet of Sacramento, Calif.; ATK Mission Systems of Ronkonkoma, N.Y.; Northrop Grumman Aerospace Corp. of Redondo Beach, Calif.; and Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne of Canoga Park, Calif. — are giants in the aerospace research industry, Rice said, in contrast to Orbitec. Formed in 1988, Orbitec is considered a national leader in small business innovation for aerospace technology and product development.