

Tuesday, June 13, 2006

Santa Ana Firm to Design NASA landing system

Irvin Aerospace project could end up on capsule.

By ROBERT WHITFIELD

The Orange County Register

SANTA ANA – Irvin Aerospace, a parachute engineering, design and manufacturing company based in Santa Ana, said it is designing an airbag landing system for the NASA space capsule that will replace the space shuttle.

Irvin received a \$250,000 contract from NASA to complete initial development of the system and plans to bid for a five-year contract worth \$2 million, said Gary Calvaneso, Vice President of Marketing for Irvin Aerospace.

The airbags would underlie the Crew Exploration Vehicle, or space capsule, that will replace the space shuttle and land astronauts on the moon, and possibly Mars and other destinations. Irvin will use an advanced modeling system to design the airbags. Engineers will simulate modifications in size and form to demonstrate landings under extreme conditions. At the end of the four-month contract, full scale demonstration tests may take place at NASA Langley's test facility in Hampton, VA. NASA will also continue landing systems, including using retro rockets.

Founded in 1919 as the Irving Airchute Company and renamed Irvin Aerospace, the company was among the first to manufacture parachutes for the U.S. government. A privately owned corporation with 163 employees, Irvin has designed deceleration and landing systems for the Space Shuttle, Pioneer Venus and Surveyor.

ILC Dover of Frederica, Del., maker of space suits and soldier gas masks, is also bidding for the contract.



HANDOUT IMAGE
SOFT LANDING: This rendering shows how the airbags would work on a capsule.