



A sensor system that would provide vital, up-to-the-minute information for first responders, could save lives, keep people from getting hurt and save property, is one of TechPort's latest entrepreneurial initiatives. Developed by Venti, LLC, of New Bern, N.C., this technology has the potential to impact many markets.

A prototype is already being tested, so Ed Hoffmann, co-founder of Venti, was attracted to the accelerator opportunities offered by Techport to fine tune his product and work with established entrepreneurs who have the skills, resources and connections to help move this project from prototype to production.

"Our mission has always been about helping move defense technology into commercial applications and vice versa," says Tommy Luginbill, director of Techport UAS Business Incubator of Southern Maryland. "Venti is a perfect match for the services we offer and how we are trying to help facilitate the transfer and sharing of technologies."

The low-cost, disposable sensor, Intelipod, gathers critical data including the presence of hazardous materials, weather information, velocity and vibration. These figures are sent to a personal computer, cell phone or laptop and stored in the cloud. Applications are being developed to share this critical data in real time, enabling first responders to quickly assess the situation at hand. Whether it's getting facts on fire dynamics or chemical content these sensors provide the vital intelligence to directly and positively impact on-scene decision-making.

"It can detect a temperature increase in a wildfire situation or in a structural fire it can pinpoint combustible off-gassing that happens before an explosion," says Ed Hoffmann, co-founder of Venti.

There are numerous ways the sensors can be deployed, hand tossed, air cannons, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and tethered. The sensors have military and commercial applications and could be used by firefighters, police officers, military and environmentalists. Working prototypes will be tested in April 2020 in an Environmental Protection Agency research study on what happens when fire lines spread. The testing, in Tallahassee, Fla., will be a test burn with the goal of having the fire line move over a specific area where the sensors are located, Hoffmann says. In addition, they will use a tether ring to suspend Intelipod from a drone to drop in and out of the blaze.

Venti's decision to join forces with TechPort was an easy one, Hoffmann says. He travels to Southern Maryland monthly for Venti business, as well as business for his other company ITG Global, a professional services company that works with Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR). Hoffmann and his business partner and wife, Melanie McTaggart, founded both of these Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) companies. "TechPort had an immediate understanding of where we are and what we are trying to do," says Hoffmann. "We are starting to make incredible headway."