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## Data streaming from planes is another way to provide vital information

**Luann Lasalle**

The Canadian Press

*MONTREAL - While the black boxes from Air France Flight 447 may never be found, a Canadian company says its real-time data streaming is another way to provide crucial information.*

*Calgary's AeroMechanical Services Ltd. (TSXV:AMA) has technology to continually send information from a plane to an airline's control centre or to its top executives.*

"The advantage of our technology is that it will tell people the immediate circumstance, including location," chairman and CEO Bill Tempany said.

The information also can be sent to pagers and to cellphones, Tempany said.

"We can send messages to a CEO to say 'There's a problem and you had better be on call,'" he said from Calgary.

French investigators said Thursday that they have abandoned their search in the Atlantic Ocean for the plane's black boxes, but may consider another one.

The Airbus jet crashed June 1 into the ocean during a storm en route from Rio de Janeiro to Paris, killing all 228 people aboard.

Tempany said his company's real-time technology is designed to supplement an aircraft's black box flight

recorders, which carry up to 40 hours of data.

"That's technology that has been perfected over 30-odd years and serves a very valuable purpose that isn't easily replaced and probably shouldn't be replaced."

He said Air France had "spotty coverage" across the Atlantic and wasn't able to get all of the data it would have normally received.

He said his company's technology would have been useful in a timely fashion.

AeroMechanical compresses information into batches, which Tempany says uses less bandwidth to send more information.

Then the information is sent every few minutes via satellite then to ground stations and then through the Internet to airlines.

The technology also allows the ground crew to communicate with the aircraft crew.

"If there's a situation where something is not performing properly we send that information immediately."

Bob Young of the U.S. Aerospace Industries Association said the renewed interest in data streaming is due to the Air France Flight 447 crash.

Young said he believes it would be very expensive for airlines to have this kind of technology on all of their planes because of the bandwidth requirements, but the Air France tragedy could make cost irrelevant.

"I am sure that in hindsight people would spend whatever the money was to have this ability to stream the data so that they would have a much better idea of what befell this airplane and caused this tragedy," he said from Arlington, Va.

But if the recorders are eventually recovered, the interest in data streaming could fade, Young said.

The use of data streaming still isn't widespread at airlines, said Young, assistant vice-president for civil aviation at the organization.

Tempany said AeroMechanical has 35 customers worldwide including Toronto's Skyservice and North American Airlines in New York. Most don't want to be named for security reasons, he said.

He said AeroMechanical is working on next-generation technology that will be able to use either the U.S.-based Iridium satellite system or cellphone networks.

AeroMechanical Services shares closed down 2.5 cents at 25.5 cents on Thursday on the TSX Venture Exchange.

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