



Neil Hoffman, left; Peter and Dave

Frank Russell, kneeling, catches a satellite signal recently. Dave Teetsel, center, and Dave Standinger, right, help.

New technology can pinpoint anything

Change in surveying, navigating foreseen — even for drivers

By Robert Frick

Democrat and Chicago

On Methodist Hill in Hemet, Idaho, well after dark one recent night, shadowy figures trudged around a sheep pasture, looking as if they were jump-starting a small flying saucer.

The saucer — an antenna receiving

satellite signals — represents the final fruit of a technology that will cheaply and accurately pinpoint anything anywhere in the world.

More than 20 companies are developing the technology for use by planes, boats, cars and even hikers, and company officials say it could evolve into a billion-dollar industry.

But on this cold night, Lester Architects/Engineers tested one application for the Navstar Global Positioning System that already has a commercial user surveying.

"It's really revolutionary technology,

not only in engineering but in safety and the way we're going to conduct our lives in the future," said James Collins, a pioneer of satellite surveying using the Navstar Global Positioning System. Collins demonstrated his company's surveying equipment to Lester, a local firm.

Navstar is a U.S. Defense Department project designed as a navigating aid for U.S. ships, submarines, jets, tanks and individual troops. Navstar satellites will circle the Earth and give precise latitude, longitude and altitude information to holders of GPS receivers.

Collins and Lester employees worked

after dark because most Navstar satellites have yet to be launched, so they must wait to survey until the existing satellites swing over North America.

Of the 11 prototype "Block I" satellites launched over the past 10 years, seven still work. Over the next three years, Delta II rockets and the space shuttle will deploy the full "constellation" of 21 Block II satellites.

The reason the people were in a sheep pasture — much to the concern of the sheep and the Monroe County sheriff's