


Texas A&M Team Puts the Vibe on Navigation Technology

By: David Norris - Email

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COLLEGE STATION, Texas A Texas A&M University professor and her team of graduate and undergraduate students have created what may be the latest in navigational [technology](#) .

The professor, Tracy Hammond, fell in love with computers and programming in the third grade.

"A lot of it, at that time, was copying codes out of a book so that you could play the games," said Hammond. "You actually had to type them all in before you could play the games."

In 2010, a military official asked Hammond if she could come up with a navigational system for paratroopers.


"These paratroopers are jumping out of their plane in the middle of the night, trying to find their location," said Hammond.

The troops currently use visual cues to find their gathering point once on the ground. Hammond and her team designed a vest that uses Haptic, or vibration sensors. A vibration on the right or left shoulder indicates a turn.

"So that gives them their hands free, their eyes free, and they're able to just directly find the location," said Hammond.

Hammond and her team decided to take the technology to the civilian world. The HaptiGo is designed for pedestrians, and the HaptiMoto is designed for motorcycle riders, allowing them to focus their eyes, hands and ears on the road while navigating.

"It connects to Google Maps, so you can pre-program and say, hey I'm going to go here," said Hammond. "And then the vest will give you navigation directions on the fly, based on where you're going. So if you happen to miss a turn, it updates just like Google Maps directs."

Doctorial researcher and [developer](#)  Manoj Prasad said the HaptiGo is equipped with sensors on the front that detect objects that may be in the way. A feature designed for pedestrians who may be distracted with digital devices and may not be paying attention to what's in front of them.

"It acts more like bats sensing," said Prasad. "So it will emit sound waves based on the reflection, and it will sense the distance."

Hammond said the technology has been tested in both military and civilian use.

The team says retail clothing stores may eventually sell clothing with the sensors built in.

The group has about six more months of testing to do, but if all goes well, they said the products could hit store shelves in about a year.

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