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Space Station Carries AE Experiment



Above: UIUC Module. On the cover: MISSE-6 experiments attached to the International Space Station, orbiting above the earth.

An experiment of AE Associate Professor Ioannis Chasiotis and his graduate student Ms. Qi Chen is underway in a set of “briefcases” attached since the spring of 2008 to the International Space Station.

The polymer nanocomposite samples with various compositions and sizes of silica nanoparticles were divided into two identical groups and were mounted on two briefcases together with samples from other research laboratories. The two briefcases, transported aboard the space shuttle Endeavour and mounted in mid-March at the exterior of the International Space Station, will be in place for the next six months. They will be returned to NASA labs and then to Chasiotis’ laboratory at UIUC by another space shuttle mission. Both sets of samples will be exposed to UV radiation, and one set will be in contact with atomic oxygen. This project aims at investigating the shielding effect of nanocomposites, the degree of deterioration of their properties in space, and of course their qualification for space materials.

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