

EmberSat advances northern Arizona pilot following XPRIZE Wildfire recognition

EmberSat emerged from Team Snuffed's XPRIZE Wildfire effort and is developing a northern Arizona pilot of its satellite-based wildfire detection and intelligence platform, with additional partners welcome.

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz., and NEW YORK, September 23, 2026: [EmberSat](#) today announced that Team Snuffed, which competed using EmberSat's satellite-based wildfire detection and intelligence platform, received **2nd Place and a \$250,000 award** in the XPRIZE Wildfire Space-Based Wildfire Detection & Intelligence track. The award was announced during Climate Week NYC at the New York City Fire Museum.

Team Snuffed was recognized as an awardee among eight finalist teams; the competition's Grand Prize was not awarded.

EmberSat was developed for the competition by Alexander Shenkin, Ph.D., founder and CEO of EmberSat. The platform brings detection, ongoing fire tracking, estimates of fire behavior and information about nearby people and infrastructure into one view.

"The challenge is not just detecting fires quickly, but minimizing false positives and making the information easy to act on," said Alexander Shenkin, Ph.D., founder and CEO of EmberSat. "Fire managers are already juggling competing demands, often with limited staff, time and resources. EmberSat is designed to reduce their cognitive load, not add another stream of data to sort through."

Shenkin is an electrical and computer engineer, a forest ecologist and an assistant research professor at Northern Arizona University.

Team Snuffed was founded by entrepreneur and engineer Cody Hartman, with David Trilling, Ph.D., of NAU's Department of Astronomy and Planetary Science serving as Track A lead. The team brings together university scientists, engineers and local fire professionals in Flagstaff, a community affected by the 2022 Tunnel and Pipeline Fires and the 2019 Museum Fire.

"This recognition validates years of work by a team that includes wildland firefighters, fire scientists, and university researchers who all call Flagstaff home," said Cody Hartman, founder of Team Snuffed. "We built this system because our own community lives with the threat of wildfire every year, and we believe the same technology can help protect communities facing that threat everywhere."

EmberSat uses machine learning to analyze publicly available satellite observations over time. Rather than relying on isolated hotspots, it models expected conditions at individual satellite pixels, combines evidence from successive observations and different satellite sources, updates confidence as new information arrives, and filters potential false alarms.

The platform combines weather, nearby assets and available incident reports with estimates of fire intensity and spread. An AI-based reviewer considers this context, including whether authorities appear to know about a fire, before sending, holding or declining an alert. Evidence and explanations are retained for review, with observation histories available in the dashboard. Email alerts and standard geospatial feeds support sharing with existing systems.

During the roughly two-week XPRIZE Wildfire Finals testing window in April 2026, EmberSat monitored a target area of approximately 800,000 square kilometers in New South Wales, Australia. Using public satellite data, the system delivered detection and fire-characterization information to judges through a live portal and data feeds.

Northern Arizona pilot and additional partners

EmberSat is currently working on a northern Arizona pilot that connects satellite-based wildfire detection and intelligence with tools to help firefighters reach wildland fires. The pilot is incorporating road data from the U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Forest Service into EmberSat's own routing engine to support route planning across the region's wildland road network.

The effort combines routing with regional satellite observations and local information about communities, critical infrastructure, land management and response jurisdictions. Its goal is to reduce the work of piecing together separate maps and reports, helping responders assess where a fire is, what may be at risk and how to reach it. The platform supports agency decision-making; it does not replace local knowledge, field assessment or official public-warning systems.

Alongside the northern Arizona effort, EmberSat welcomes discussions with fire agencies, utilities, land managers and other organizations interested in additional pilots. These collaborations would evaluate detection, alert usefulness, operator workload and routing in local conditions.

EmberSat's longer-term vision includes launching dedicated wildfire-detection satellites to complement and extend the software platform. Using observations from satellites already in orbit allows the software and pilot work to move forward without waiting for new spacecraft.

About EmberSat

[EmberSat](#) develops satellite-based wildfire detection and intelligence software to help organizations understand developing fires and prioritize attention. The platform combines analysis of satellite observations over time, ongoing fire tracking and contextual alerting, with a focus on reducing operator workload.

About Team Snuffed

Team Snuffed is a Flagstaff, Arizona-based team founded by entrepreneur and engineer Cody Hartman. It brings together private-sector engineers, NAU scientists, wildland firefighters and local fire professionals to pursue wildfire detection, assessment and response. Its mission is to protect communities and natural environments, starting in its own backyard and scaling globally. Team Snuffed competed in the Track A finals using EmberSat.

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