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ARCTEK Signs With Frontline To Build First 2.4-Meter Hi-Def Sprinter C-Band Uplink

Order also adds second Ku-band HD uplink to ARCTEK fleet.

(Minneapolis) ARCTEK Satellite Productions LLC announced today that it has placed an order with Frontline Communications to build the industry's first Sprinter-based 2.4-meter, high-definition, C-band digital satellite uplink. The unit will be designated ARCTEK White.

ARCTEK's second new HD uplink will be another Ku-band vehicle, which will be identified as ARCTEK Red. This will accompany the company's first Sprinter-based uplink, ARCTEK Green, which went into service in June 2004. Both trucks will be completed in time for display at the National Association of Broadcaster's 2007 exhibition in Las Vegas, Nev.

"ARCTEK is raising the bar through the use of redundant 750-watt amplifiers to provide maximum allowable power to the antenna under all conditions, consequently allowing positive power margins for any video or HDTV transmission condition," said ARCTEK Engineering Consultant Ray Conover.

"No new territory is being blazed by merely using a 2.4-meter antenna to uplink digital C-band video," continued Conover. "Other companies have used these antennas to successfully transmit digital TV events for years, most employing C-band amplifiers in the 400-plus watt range. But with waveguide losses and a back off required for optimum linear digital operation, the real power available to the antenna has been below the maximum the FCC allows for small C-band antennas."

"Digital transmissions with the associated lower power requirements and interference potential have made possible the use of the small C-band uplink antennas," added Conover. "It is impressive to transmit C-band HD from a small SNG-sized platform. ARCTEK once again has shown a willingness to provide the best mobile platform performance in a small package."

"This is an exciting and innovative move for ARCTEK," said Todd Hanks, ARCTEK Satellite Productions Managing Partner and President. "We've always been about value, service and providing the appropriate solution for our customers. This is an opportunity for us to expand our product line and give the C-Band market an alternative to the behemoth footprint and expense of traditional C-Band uplink trucks. The Sprinter is about a third of the size of conventional C-Band rigs."

ARCTEK White will feature HD monitoring at every level, including bit stream analyzers and Dolby E decoders. The uplink will also have redundant Tandberg SD/HD digital encoders.

“Putting the monitoring and encoding in the uplink eliminates the typical scenario of one company providing encoding and another providing transmission,” said Shawn Erickson, ARCTEK Partner and Vice President of Engineering.

“C-band transmission is becoming the default standard for the delivery of HDTV events required by broadcasters,” Erickson continued. “ARCTEK White will be configured specifically for providing backhaul transmission of these events.”

“Today’s HD productions have bigger space requirements and present a larger footprint at venues where space is already at a premium,” said Brian Stanley, ARCTEK Partner and Vice President of Sales and Operations. “The smaller size of the Sprinter provides more options for parking and takes up a lot less space.”

Both units will be equipped with on board 12.5-kilowatt generators to provide backup in the case of a loss of shore power. The unit’s fuel tanks have the capacity to run the generator for two days before refueling.

“Using the Sprinter chassis makes it easier and more efficient to deliver our product to our customers,” Stanley added. “The vehicle’s gross weight is below DOT weight restrictions and the vehicle uses one-half the diesel of larger uplink vehicles.”

“It’s always been our practice to pass any increase in value or savings along to our clients,” continued Stanley. “Because we already had one Sprinter in our fleet, we were able to face higher diesel prices without raising rates or charging fuel surcharges.”

These two new trucks will bring the ARCTEK fleet of digital/HD uplinks to three.

“We picked Frontline, in part, because of our long term relationship...all our trucks were built by them...and, of course, reliability, innovation and workmanship played a big part,” added Hanks. “But frankly, it was the overall value they deliver. Let me stress, they weren't the lowest bidder, but we knew right from the moment we started the bidding process we were going to get superior performance. You get a lot more truck for the price.”

ARCTEK Satellite Productions operates analog, digital, and high-definition uplinks and provides single and multiple camera productions, production management, satellite media tours, webcasting, field producing and directing, planning and covering broadcast events, shooting b-roll and editing.

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