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Smart Rovers

Story by Pam White

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A University of Arizona scientist and his team are developing intelligent robots for planetary exploration.

Currently it takes hours for scientists here on earth to send commands to rovers exploring the surface of Mars. Professor Wolfgang Fink of the University of Arizona's Department of [Electrical and Computer](#)



Autonomous rovers may revolutionize space exploration.

tier would be calling the shots. Professor Fink says that some day surface rovers might function like "field geologists" that explore their environment and make intelligent decisions about where to go and what to investigate next.

[Engineering](#), envisions planetary exploration being conducted by tiers of intelligent, freethinking robots that could include satellites, blimps, a fleet of surface rovers and even sea rovers.

The idea is that an orbiting satellite would direct blimps to look for interesting areas of a planet's surface. The blimps in turn would deploy rovers on the surface of the planet to investigate geological features in more detail.

Fink calls this new paradigm "Tier-Scalable Reconnaissance." Communication between the tiers would take just seconds, not hours, and the satellite at the top of the



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