

Ka-Band Highly-Constrained Deployable Antenna for RalnCube

PI: Yahya Rahmat-Samii, UCLA

Objective

- Develop lightweight, deployable antennas that will be used for RaInCube (Radar In a CubeSat (RIC)), a mission concept for fast temporal profiling of rainfall and snowfall using a constellation of compact precipitation radars on CubeSats/SmallSats.
 - For 6-12U CubeSat (RIC-6U):
 - Design, fabricate, and test a 1 m reflector antenna with ~47 dB of gain at 35.7GHz (stowed volume 10 x 10 x 30 cm³).
 - For 50-kg SmallSat (RIC-S50): ٠
 - Design a 2 m reflector antenna with 52 dB of gain at 35.7GHz (stowed volume 20 x 20 x 50 cm³).
- This compact deployable antenna concept can be adapted to other microsatellite and nanosatellite sensing applications.

Accomplishments

- Completed the detailed RF design of the overall mesh reflector antenna and its feed horn system for RIC-6U.
- Developed, optimized, prototyped and tested a compact low mass (64.03 g) profiled feed horn with better than 20 dB return loss within the Ka-band operating frequency.
- Characterized the performance of a newly developed mesh surface material through detailed simulations and RF testing.
- Designed, built and tested a 1 m offset-fed deployable mesh reflector antenna. Verified surface figure accuracy and repeatability to the 0.2mm level (rms) through several antenna deployment tests and the use of a newly developed laser metrology system.
- This antenna achieved a measured gain of 49.2 dB at 35.7 GHz, with 60% aperture efficiency.
 - Measured antenna pattern and gain results were in excellent agreement with simulations.
- Developed and detailed the design of a compact 2 m offset mesh reflector antenna (RIC-S50) with predicted gain of 55dB and multi-beam capabilities. Radiation patterns of this antenna were simulated with desired beam overlaps.

Co-Is/Partners: Eva Peral, Richard Hodges, Jonathan Sauder, Simone Tanelli, JPL; Gregg Freebury, Tendeg



Engineering prototype of the 1 m, 35.7 GHz offset mesh reflector antenna in stow (L) and deployed (R) positions.







Conceptual design of the 1 m and 2 m, 35.7 GHz offset mesh reflector antenna system.



Optimized profiled feed horn

RIC-6U: TRL_{in}= 3 TRL_{out}= 5 TRL_{out}= 3 **RIC-S50**: TRL_{in}= 2

