

## New NASCAR drying system debuts for Speedweeks

Nate Ryan, USA TODAY Sports

6:16p.m. EST February 12, 2013



(Photo: Mike Meadows, ISC)

NASCAR unveiled the particulars of its new track drying system but doesn't have a timeframe for a full-scale rollout for the Air Titan.

The new technology, which is designed to reduce track drying time by 80%, will make its debut during Speedweeks at Daytona International Speedway, but vice president of racing operations Steve O'Donnell said that its return to the track is indefinite after "Phase 1" is completed with the Daytona 500.

"I think we want to see how it goes," O'Donnell said Tuesday. "Keep in mind that this has never been tested during a race or during full rain conditions at a track, so we've still got some work to do once we see it, if we do see it in play, and we'll learn from there and make sure we've got the best model going forward possible for other tracks."

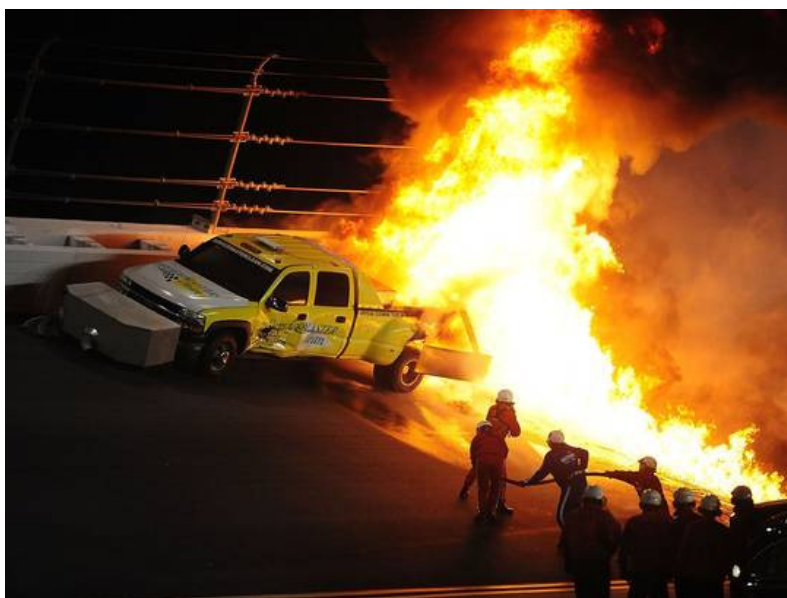
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Last year's Daytona 500 was the first to be delayed by rain. When it finally started on a Monday night, it was delayed for two hours because of a massive fire sparked by Juan Pablo Montoya's collision with a jet dryer as it removed debris under caution. O'Donnell said jet dryers still would be used to blow debris off the track, though there is hope the Air Titan eventually will be used for the same purpose.

O'Donnell estimates Daytona's 2.5-mile oval could be dried in 30 minutes.

O'Donnell said the system is ready to be deployed at any track, but NASCAR still is making tweaks to how the Air Titan is powered. The system relies on 17 diesel-powered air compressors to push water to the apron, where it is vacuumed by a sweeper truck.

"There are still some challenges there and some logistical challenges depending on where we're racing," he said. "We've got some relationships to develop for the racetracks, and once those are in place, we feel confident that we'll get there. The priority for us is our racetracks and our fans, so we'll obviously deploy it to every track as soon as we can."



Safety crews work to put out a fire from a jet dryer that burst into flames after Juan Pablo Montaya crashed into during the 2012 Daytona 500. (Photo: Andrew Weber, USA TODAY Sports)

Though NASCAR is bringing its own Air Titan to Daytona, O'Donnell said the plan for the future would be for tracks to buy their own Air Titans, rather than supplying the jet dryers currently used for rain delays.

"If everything works, you could see jet dryers being a thing of the past," O'Donnell said. "You could see that model where the tracks have gone out and

purchased jet dryers that they now are purchasing the Air Titans and having their own air supply at each track because obviously they host more than just NASCAR events."

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O'Donnell said no cost has been established yet for the Air Titan system, which has been developed through a collaborative effort between NASCAR and outside suppliers, which own patents on some of the equipment. O'Donnell said NASCAR has patented the Air Titan system and eventually would like to have its own all-in-one system.

"Absolutely, that's the ultimate goal if we can get there," he said. "But through all the tests we did, this gave us the best result using all those techniques and combinations."

The system works with two sets of identical equipment on opposite sides of the track that will move in the same direction for one complete pass.

Once in place, the new system should make the drying process much greener. The Air Titan operates on diesel fuel, which burns 100 gallons in nine to 10 hours. Jet fuel burns at a rate of about 100 gallons per hour.

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