

Google Executive Sets New Freefall Jump Record

The tech giant's senior vice president is carried up to 136,400ft by a helium balloon before falling back to earth at 800mph.

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By Sean Dilley, Sky News Reporter

A senior Google executive has set a new record for the highest parachute jump at more than 135,000 feet (41,000 meters).

Fifty-seven-year-old Alan Eustace was lifted from an abandoned runway at an airport in New Mexico to the edge of space by a balloon filled with 35,000 cubic feet (990 cubic metres) of helium.

It broke the previous record, a 128,100 foot freefall achieved by 45-year-old Felix Baumgartner in October 2012.

Unlike the former record holder, who was 14 years his junior when he set the previous record, Google's senior vice president of knowledge chose to make his attempt in secret.

Mr Eustace spent two hours and seven minutes climbing to an altitude of 136,401 feet (41,575 m or nearly 26 miles). He began his freefall at 135,890 feet.

Wearing a self-contained space suit similar to those used in the international space station, the computer scientist used an explosive device to separate himself from the balloon which elevated him.

He descended towards the earth at speeds which peaked at more than 800mph, breaking the sound barrier and creating a sonic boom.

After landing, he said: "You could see the darkness of space and you could see the atmosphere, which I had never seen before.

"It was a wild, wild ride."

Mr Eustace has spent 34 months of secret planning and training with a team from Paragon Space Development Corporation to prepare for his four-and-a-half minute freefall.

Company CEO Grant Anderson said: "Together, Alan and the team extended human space flight to the stratosphere in an important step to solidify the safety of future human endeavours."

"This has opened up endless possibilities for humans to explore previously seldom visited parts of our atmosphere."



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Gallery: Google Executive In Sky Dive Record Attempt

Alan Eustace prepares to lift off. Pictures: Paragon Space Development Corporation



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Alan Eustace prepares to lift off. Pictures: Paragon Space Development Corporation