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The robotic rat that could save lives

SCIENTISTS have unveiled a pioneering robotic rat that could be used to search through rubble and burning buildings for survivors – using only its whiskers.

The Scratchbot uses latest state-of-the-art technology to hunt through pitch black or smoke-filled rooms by relying solely on touch sensors located on a set of whiskers.

It could have massive implications in search and rescue missions by picking its way through rubble and debris or help in mine-clearing operations.

Researchers from the University of Bristol and University of Sheffield have spent six years and 500,000 painstakingly researching and designing the robotic rat, which could revolutionise rescue missions.

The project was inspired by the use of touch in the animal kingdom – specifically how rats explore their environments using whiskers in poorly-lit places. The rodents can determine the texture, position and shape of objects using rhythmic sweeping movements of their whiskers.