Boeing-Built-Delta II to Launch NASA'S Advanced Composition Explorer

A Boeing [NYSE:BA] Delta II model 7920 rocket is in final preparations for the launch of NASA's Advanced Composition Explorer (ACE) observatory on Aug. 24 from Cape Canaveral Air Station, Fla. Liftoff from Space Launch Complex 17 is scheduled for 10:41 a.m. EDT.

"As with the Mars Pathfinder and Mars Global Surveyor, our team is dedicated to consistently meeting our customers tight delivery requirements with reliable launch vehicles. We look forward to the reward of knowledge that will be provided from this mission," said Darryl Van Dorn, Boeing director for NASA and commercial Delta programs.

The Delta II second stage will deliver the observatory into an elliptical transfer orbit. ACE then will use its own propulsion system to establish an orbit between the Earth and the sun. Approximately one million miles from Earth, the ACE observatory will conduct its mission to examine the composition of several different types of solar and galactic matter.

The ACE observatory contains nine scientific instruments: six state-of-the-art spectrometers and three monitor instruments. The information gathered by ACE may provide data as to the origin and evolution of solar and galactic matter. The observatory also will monitor solar-wind and provide advance warning of powerful geomagnetic storms that can disrupt power and communications systems on Earth and present a hazard to astronauts in space.

The Explorers Project of the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) is managing the ACE mission for NASA. GSFC will conduct mission operations and the California Institute of Technology (CIT), the developer of the science payload, will conduct science missions. Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory designed and integrated ACE.

The ACE mission is the third scientific mission launched for NASA on a Delta II within a one-year time frame. Other missions included: the Mars Global Surveyor, launched in November 1996; and the Mars Pathfinder, launched in December 1996.

Earlier this week a Boeing Delta II launched five IRIDIUM® system satellites from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., completing one-third of the 66 satellite constellation.

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