Boeing Delta II to Launch NASA's STARDUST Spacecraft

Delta II, the Boeing [NYSE: BA] rocket that sent four NASA probes to Mars, will soon send the latest NASA craft on the first leg of a galactic search and recovery mission.

Scheduled for launch from Cape Canaveral Air Station, Fla., at 4:06:42 p.m. EST on Feb. 6, a Delta II rocket will boost the STARDUST spacecraft into orbit where it will collect samples of cosmic matter before its integrated return capsule returns to Earth seven years later. Upon mission completion, it will mark the first NASA mission to collect extraterrestrial material from outside the orbit of the Moon.

"We support NASA's philosophy of making the art and science of space exploration better, faster and cheaper," said Darryl Van Dorn, Boeing director of commercial and NASA Delta programs. "We also strive to support this effort by providing low-cost, reliable launch services for these one-of-a-kind missions."

The STARDUST spacecraft's primary objective is an encounter with the comet known as Wild 2 in January 2004. The spacecraft will photograph the comet and will send back to Earth real-time analysis of samples of cometary dust. Additional cometary dust particles, collected during flight will undergo further examination when they are returned in a reentry capsule that will parachute to Earth in 2006.

The spacecraft also will collect samples of interstellar dust. Analysis of all dust, some of which originates from the formation of the solar system, is expected to yield important insight into the evolution of the sun and planets and possibly into the origin of life itself.

The STARDUST mission is a collaborative effort between NASA, and university and industry partners, including the University of Washington, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and Lockheed Martin Astronautics, contractor for the STARDUST spacecraft and return capsule.

The STARDUST spacecraft will be launched aboard a Delta II, a medium capacity expendable launch vehicle derived from the Delta family of rockets built and launched since 1960. The Delta II rocket is manufactured in Huntington Beach, Calif., with final assembly in Pueblo, Colo., and is powered by the RS-27A engine built by Boeing in Canoga Park, Calif. The Delta launch team at Cape Canaveral Air Station will handle launch coordination and operations for the NASA mission.

Alliant Techsystems, Magna, Utah, builds the graphite epoxy motors for boost assist. Aerojet, Sacramento, Calif., manufactures the second-stage engine, Cordant Technologies, Elkton, Md., supplies the upper-stage engine, and AlliedSignal, Teterboro, N.J., builds the guidance and flight control system.

MEDIA ACCREDITATION

Media without permanent accreditation who wish to cover the launch and the pre-launch news conference, should send a letter of request to NASA on news organization letterhead. It should include name and Social Security number or passport number. Letters should be faxed to (407) 867-2692. For full details, contact Lisa Fowler at NASA, (407) 867-2468.

REMOTE CAMERA SET UP

Following the press conference on L-1, a NASA van will depart the NASA-Kennedy Space Center News Center at 3 p.m. for news photographers who wish to set up remote cameras at Launch Complex 17.

TOWER ROLLBACK PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

A photo opportunity of the Delta launch vehicle for STARDUST will be available following tower rollback on launch day. Media wishing to participate will depart the Cape Canaveral Air Station Gate 1 Pass & ID Bldg. at 10 a.m.

NEWS CONFERENCES AND LAUNCH DAY COVERAGE

A pre-launch news conference is scheduled for 2 p.m. EST L-1 at the Kennedy Space Center auditorium.

Media covering the launch from Press Site 1 should meet at the CCAS Gate 1 Pass & ID Bldg. The caravan will leave promptly at 2:30 p.m. EST. A STARDUST mission badge is required for all news media covering the launch from Press Site 1.

A post-launch news conference will be held at 6 p.m. EST launch day in the KSC News Center auditorium.

NASA TELEVISION, V-CIRCUIT COVERAGE AND WEBCASTING

NASA Television will carry the pre-launch news conference starting at 2 p.m. EST, Friday, Feb. 5. On launch day, countdown coverage will begin at 2:30 p.m. EST, continuing through spacecraft separation (approximately 28 minutes later). The post-launch news conference also will be carried, starting at 6 p.m. EST.

NASA Television is available on GE-2, transponder 9C, located at 85 degrees West longitude. Audio only of STARDUST events also will be available on the "V" circuits, which may be dialed directly at (407) 867-1220, (407) 867-1240, (407) 867-1260, (407) 867-7135, (407) 867-4003, (407) 867-4920.

Information on viewing the launch over the Internet is available at the STARDUST site:
http://stardust.jpl.nasa.gov/mission/launch_internet.html

###

99-022

For further information:
Boeing Communications
(714) 896-1301
Boeing Launch Hotline
(714) 896-4770