

Boeing Delta II Boosts NASA Satellite Telescope Into Orbit

A Boeing Delta II launch vehicle lifted off at 11:44 a.m. EDT today placing a satellite telescope into orbit that will increase astronomers' abilities to test basic theories about the evolution of galaxies and the formation of the universe.

The Far Ultraviolet Spectroscopic Explorer (FUSE) satellite is sensitive to a portion of the energy spectrum of light that is invisible to the eye. FUSE will allow astronomers to study ultraviolet light wavelengths that are unobservable to other telescopes.

The launch is one in the series of Medium Light (Med-Lite) launches for NASA and the first using a two-stage Delta equipped with a 10-foot-diameter fairing to protect the payload and three, instead of the usual nine, solid rocket motors on the first stage.

"This unique vehicle configuration is just one example of the Delta rockets' hallmark flexibility in meeting customer requirements," said Darryl Van Dorn, director of NASA and Commercial Launches. This year, Delta II rockets have flown with three, four and nine solid rocket motors. "Since 1960, Delta rockets have carried 78 scientific and technology development payloads into space with a 98 percent launch success rate."

Last year, Delta launched Mars Climate Orbiter and Deep Space 1 for NASA. This year, Delta II rockets successfully launched NASA's Mars Polar Lander, Deep Space 2, Stardust and Landsat 7.

FUSE was developed for NASA by the Johns Hopkins University. This is the first time that a mission of this scope has been developed and operated entirely by a university. In addition, FUSE is being developed in collaboration with the French and Canadian space agencies which are sharing observing time.

The Delta II 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.

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.

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