Launch Date Set for Boeing-Built NASA Tracking and Data Relay Satellite

A Boeing-built satellite, which will increase NASA's ability to provide clear communications in the busy radio environment of space, is scheduled for launch on Dec. 4 from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla.

The modified Boeing 601 satellite, called TDRS-J, is the third of three Tracking and Data Relay Satellites built by Boeing [NYSE: BA], for NASA Goddard Space Flight Center of Greenbelt, Md. The launch will take place during a 40-minute launch window that opens at 9:42 p.m. EST (6:42 p.m. PST; 2:42 a.m. Dec. 5 GMT).

The three newest TDRS spacecraft will replenish and augment the current fleet, which has served the space shuttle and other orbiting spacecraft for almost two decades.

"This spacecraft will join its two immediate predecessors in bringing valuable new capacity and capability to the TDRS fleet, which serves as the primary communications lifeline for mankind's near-Earth exploration efforts in space," said Randy Brinkley, president of Boeing Satellite Systems, the El Segundo, Calif.-based satellite-manufacturing arm of Boeing Integrated Defense Systems. "The technology aboard TDRS-J will provide more than twice the current science data transmission rates for future space missions."

TDRS-J features innovative folding antennas that meet NASA's requirements for low-weight reflectors with a large surface area. The antennas can simultaneously transmit and receive at multiple frequency bands.

The three newest TDRS satellites maintain the specialized space communications capabilities of the current TDRS constellation, which provides continuous, high-data-rate communications with the space shuttle, the International Space Station and dozens of unmanned scientific satellites in low-Earth orbit, including the Hubble Space Telescope. TDRS-H was successfully launched in June 2000. TDRS-I reached geosynchronous orbit on Sept. 30, and is currently undergoing in-orbit tests.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $23 billion business. It provides systems solutions to its global military, government and commercial customers. It is a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; the world's largest military aircraft manufacturer; the world's largest satellite manufacturer and a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in launch services.

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