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NASA has awarded Boeing [NYSE: BA] a firm, fixed-price contract valued at \$145 million to procure replacement battery units for the International Space Station (ISS).

The advanced nickel hydrogen batteries are used to store electrical energy primarily for use during the 16 solar eclipses or nighttime periods that the space station encounters during its daily orbits around the Earth. The eclipses, which occur about every 90 minutes, can require the ISS to run on battery power for upwards of 35 minutes continuously.

When completely assembled, primary power generation for the ISS will be accomplished with four Photovoltaic Modules labeled P6 (currently on orbit), P4, S4, and S6. Each module holds 12 battery units and provides 22 kilowatts of power -- enough for 20 small homes. The NASA contract procures replacement batteries for P4, S4 and S6 along with four spare units.

Based on the current life of the batteries and baseline launch dates, the batteries on P4, S4 and S6 will need to be replaced between 2009 and 2011. P6's first replacement set of batteries is currently in production. A second set of replacement batteries will not be required before 2013.

"Providing NASA with these batteries will enable them to meet projected on-orbit battery replacement needs and contingency scenarios for the rest of this decade," said Jim Berreth, director, ISS Electrical Power Subsystem for Boeing in Houston.

The initial delivery of production units for this contract will be early 2006 with required lead-time for manufacture, assembly and test.

Space Systems/Loral, a Boeing subcontractor in Palo Alto, Calif., will perform the fabrication and assembly work.

As the prime contractor for the ISS, Boeing is responsible for design, development, construction and integration of the ISS and assisting NASA in operating the orbital outpost. Boeing built all of the major U.S. elements. In addition, Boeing oversees thousands of subcontractors around the globe and works with NASA and 16 international partners on the project.

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 \$25 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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