

Boeing Delta II Lifts NASA Spacecraft to Orbit

A Boeing [NYSE: BA] Delta II rocket today successfully launched to orbit a pair of NASA satellites that will further study clouds and aerosols.

The Delta II lifted off from Space Launch Complex 2W, Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., at an instantaneous window of 3:02 a.m. PDT carrying the Cloud-Aerosol Lidar and Infrared Pathfinder Satellite Observations (CALIPSO) and CloudSat satellites.

The CALIPSO spacecraft was deployed 62 minutes after liftoff, and the CloudSat spacecraft was deployed 96 minutes after liftoff. The spacecraft will fly 15 seconds apart as members of NASA's "A-Train," a constellation of Earth-observing satellites.

CALIPSO and CloudSat are the third and fourth A-Train satellites launched by Delta II rockets. The other two include Aqua, launched on May 4, 2002, and Aura, launched on July 15, 2004.

"I'm extremely proud of the entire launch team for delivering our customer's payloads to the proper orbit, showing once again its commitment to mission success," said Dan Collins, vice president of Boeing Launch Systems. "Today's launch marks the 45th consecutive successful Delta launch and the fifth successful dual payload mission by the Delta team."

The mission's Delta II 7420-10 configuration launch vehicle used a Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne RS-27A main engine, four ATK solid rocket motors, an Aerojet AJ10-118K second stage engine, lower and upper dual payload attach fitting components, and a 10-foot diameter payload fairing.

CALIPSO will provide the next generation of climate observations, including an advanced study of clouds and aerosols that will improve the ability to predict climate change and study air quality. CloudSat will furnish data to evaluate and improve the way clouds are represented in global models, contributing to better predictions of clouds and their relationship with climate change.

The next Delta mission is the GOES N launch for NASA on May 18 aboard a Delta IV Medium+ (4, 2) rocket from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla.

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