

Tuesday, January 5, 1999

## Mars Polar Lander heads for red planet



## Next Delta launch from CCAS set for Feb. 6

▲ **The Mars Polar Lander** was successfully **launched on time** aboard a Boeing Delta II rocket on Sunday, Jan. 3. A trajectory correction maneuver will be conducted on Jan. 18 and the spacecraft will continue its cruise for a rendezvous with Mars on Dec 3, 1999. Its companion spacecraft, the Mars Climate Orbiter, which was launched on Dec. 11, 1998, is expected to reach Mars on Sept. 23, 1999.

▲ **The Next NASA Payload Launch:** On Feb. 6, a Boeing Delta II rocket carrying the **Stardust** spacecraft is scheduled to launch. **Stacking** of the rocket at Launch Complex 17A, Cape Canaveral Air Station, **begins Tuesday, Jan. 5**. Stardust will capture comet particles flying off the nucleus of comet Wild 2 in January 2004, plus collect interstellar dust for later analysis. The collected samples will return to Earth in a re-entry capsule to be jettisoned from Stardust as it swings by in January 2006.

**Asteroid Rendezvous:** At noon, Jan. 3, the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (NEAR) mission team conducted a 24-minute, large bipropellant engine burn, to increase the spacecraft's speed for a **rendezvous with Eros in February 2000**. NASA's Deep Space Network, which is tracking the NEAR spacecraft, confirmed the accuracy of the burn. It increased NEAR's speed by 2,100 mph (940 meters per second) to catch up to the faster-moving Eros asteroid, which overtook NEAR during the Dec. 23 flyby. At the time of the burn, the spacecraft was 565,650 miles from Eros. For now, NEAR continues on its orbit around the sun, traveling at about 43,000 mph as it gains on asteroid Eros.

**Mailhub Upgrade:** ODIN postponed its planned upgrade from Jan. 2 to Saturday, Jan. 9. The process will occur from noon to 6 p.m. Any incoming mail during that time frame will be deferred until after completion. For questions or concerns, please contact the system administrators at 867-ODIN. Prior to the upgrade, the 60-day **mail purge** will occur on Wednesday, **Jan. 6, 1999 after 4:30 p.m.** This means that anything older than 60 days will be purged from mailboxes. Please take the proper steps to save any messages that you do not want deleted.

**Satellites of the Future:** In an experiment that could change the way satellites are flown in Earth orbit, the U.S./French TOPEX/Poseidon satellite has successfully completed the first-ever NASA autonomous navigational maneuver. The experiment, which was designed to help validate technology that allows Earth-orbiting satellites to autonomously adjust their orbits, was conducted in early December from the TOPEX/Poseidon mission control room at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. **NASA's first mission planned to test completely autonomous navigation** is the New Millennium Program's **Earth Orbiter 1** planned for launch in **late 1999 or early 2000**.

**Did You Know?** The energy released by the three Space Shuttle main engines is equivalent to the output of 23 Hoover Dams.

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