NASA to study comet collision

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NASA's robotic Deep Impact spacecraft has observed a massive eruption from comet Tempel 1, just days before the comet is expected to collide with a probe.

The space agency said Wednesday the June 22 outburst was larger than one photographed recently by the Hubble Space Telescope.

The Deep Impact craft is scheduled to release an 820-pound copper probe to collide with the comet July 4.

"It's going to create a massive explosion," said geologist Peter Schultz, a Brown University professor and crater expert chosen by NASA as one of 13 investigators overseeing the mission, dubbed Deep Impact, the Providence (R.I.) Journal reported. The mission is expected to culminate at around in the early morning hours of July 4.

Participating scientists from Cardiff University in Wales have said they believe the impact could reveal organic matter inside the comet.

"Not only is Deep Impact a spectacular experiment, it is also a test for our long-standing arguments," said Professor Chandra Wickramasinghe. "It will show, we believe, that a comet is not a rubble pile, nor a conglomerate of ices, but a porous mass of organics and ice under the black asphalt crust."