

Deep Impact Mission Update

August 23 2005

Ever since Deep Impact's spectacularly successful collision with comet Tempel 1, Principal Investigator Michael A'Hearn and mission colleagues at the University of Maryland and seven other institutions have been working at top speed to analyze the huge amount of raw data collected during the brief encounter.

Preliminary scientific results were publicly released during the first week after the July 4th impact. In early August, members of the Deep Impact science team presented these same preliminary findings to fellow scientists at the Asteroids, Comets, Meteors meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The mission's principal findings will be published in a September issue of the journal Science.

"We got spectacular results and a wonderful wealth of data," said A'Hearn. "Over the past weeks since impact, the science team has been working furiously to be ready to publish the mission's major findings in Science."

As part of that process, the Deep Impact science team got together at the end of July for an intense, weeklong working session. They gathered in Hawaii, the main ground-based observing site for the mission. The team was joined by collaborating astronomers from Hawaii and around the world, who participated in person and via videoconference.

"Our tasks involved reviewing some of the most interesting data that we collected, reporting on the calibration, checking it and cross-checking, discussing possible interpretations and defining additional questions we

need to have answered so we can arrive at robust interpretations of the nature of the comet before impact, the phenomenon of the impact itself, and the effects of the impact afterwards," said Deep Impact science team member Lucy McFadden of the University of Maryland.

In keeping with the mission's long-planned schedule, the full set of raw and calibrated data from the mission will be delivered to NASA's Planetary Data System in January 2006. The Planetary Data System archives and publicly distributes scientific data from NASA planetary missions, astronomical observations, and laboratory measurements.

Source: University of Maryland

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