

Mars Orbiter Launch Delayed Until Friday

August 11 2005

Today's launch of the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter has been postponed due to a fuel level sensor issue with the Centaur upper stage aboard the Atlas V rocket.

While loading liquid hydrogen into the Centaur, fuel level sensors inside the stage sent back erroneous readings. At this time engineers are determining whether the problem is with the sensor system or the computer software used with it. The next launch attempt is currently slated to take place in approximately 24 hours.

The spacecraft will examine Martian features ranging from the top of the atmosphere to underground layering. Researchers will use it to study the history and distribution of Martian water. It will also support future Mars missions by characterizing landing sites and providing a high-data-rate communications relay.

"Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter is the next step in our ambitious exploration of Mars," said NASA's director, Mars Exploration Program, Science Mission Directorate, Douglas McCuiston. "We expect to use this spacecraft's eyes in the sky in coming years as our primary tools to identify and evaluate the best places for future missions to land."

Find more about Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter launch at www.physorg.com/news5720.html

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