

SMART-1 To Crash Into Lunar Surface In August

February 7 2006



The European Moon probe SMART-1, which was developed by SSC for ESA, has been orbiting the Moon since November 2004. Its main mission, to qualify an electric propulsion system, is completed, and the probe is now making observations of the lunar surface using its onboard scientific instruments.

The first scientific results from SMART-1 will be published in connection with an ESA event in February.

The natural effects of gravity from the Sun and the Earth will cause SMART-1 to crash into the lunar surface in August this year. The touch-down will occur at a flat angle near latitude 37 degrees south. The crash, which will be observable by telescope from Earth, may stir up dust or

create other effects, providing valuable information about the lunar surface.

Astronomers are invited to take part in observations of the crash

For the crash to be observable, the touch-down must take place on the part of the Moon that is facing Earth. To enable this, ESA is considering using the small remaining quantity of fuel onboard to modify the spacecraft's orbit. At present, SSC's engineers are preparing the necessary rocket impulses. ESA has also distributed a circular letter to scientists to gauge their interest in these observations.

China and India training with SMART-1

Apart from making observations of the lunar surface from a gradually lower orbit, SMART-1 will be used by Indian and Chinese ground stations for radio control training for their future moon orbiters.

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