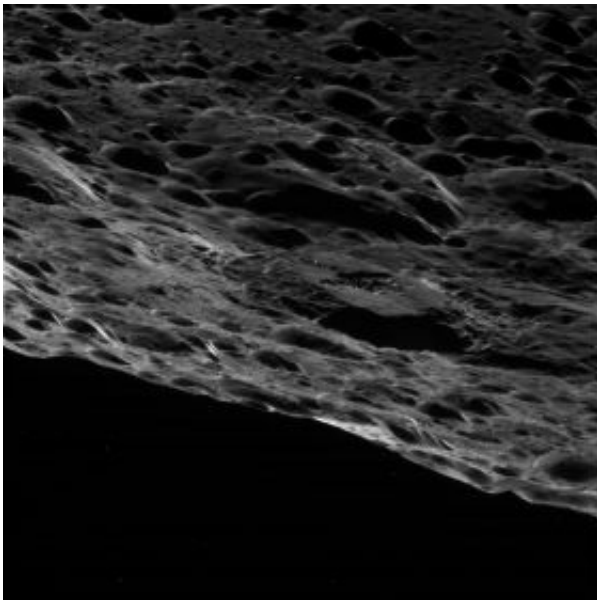


Cassini Gets Close-Up Views of Saturn's Moon Iapetus

September 12 2007



Saturn's moon Iapetus. Image credit: NASA/JPL/Space Science Institute

Cassini completed its closest flyby of the odd moon Iapetus on Sept. 10, 2007. The spacecraft flew about 1,640 kilometers (1,000 miles) from Iapetus' surface and is returning amazing views of the bizarre moon.

All the data were successfully recorded on the spacecraft. Twenty-one minutes into the first post-flyby data downlink, the spacecraft went into a precautionary condition called "safe mode. The cause has been determined to be a solid state power switch that was tripped due to a

galactic cosmic ray hit.

While in safe mode, the spacecraft turns off all unnecessary activities and transmits only essential engineering telemetry at a low data rate, while it awaits commands from Earth.

Tuesday morning, Sept. 11, commands were sent to the spacecraft to resume high rate science and engineering data playback. The project expects all data on the spacecraft will be returned to Earth during downlinks on Tuesday and Wednesday, with no impact on the Iapetus science data return beyond a brief delay.

Due to the safing event, the sequence executing on the spacecraft was halted, and Cassini's instruments will not be turned back on for three or four days. The last time Cassini was in safe mode was over four years ago.

Source: NASA

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