

Ice Cold Sunrise on Mars

August 27 2008



This red-filter image taken by the Phoenix landers Surface Stereo Imager shows the sun rising on the morning of sol 90 (Aug. 25), the last day of the Phoenix nominal mission. The Phoenix Mars mission has been extended through the end of September 2008. (NASA/JPL-Caltech/University of Arizona/Texas A&M University)

(PhysOrg.com) -- From the location of NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander, above the Martian arctic circle, the sun does not set during the peak of the Martian summer.

This period of maximum solar energy is past – on Sol 86, the 86th Martian day after the Phoenix landing, the sun fully set behind a slight rise to the north for about half an hour.

The lander's Surface Stereo Imager took a red-filter image that shows the sun rising on the morning of sol 90 (Aug. 25), the last day of the Phoenix nominal mission.

The image was taken at 51 minutes past midnight local solar time during the slow sunrise that followed a 75 minute "night."

The skylight in the image is light scattered off atmospheric dust particles and ice crystals.

The setting sun does not mean the end of the mission. In late July, the mission was extended through September, rather than the 90-sol duration originally planned as the prime mission.

The Phoenix mission is led by Peter Smith from The University of Arizona with project management at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and development partnership at Lockheed Martin, Denver. International contributions come from the Canadian Space Agency; the University of Neuchatel, Switzerland; the universities of Copenhagen and Aarhus in Denmark; the Max Planck Institute in Germany; and the Finnish Meteorological Institute. The California Institute of Technology in Pasadena manages JPL for NASA.

Provided by University of Arizona

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