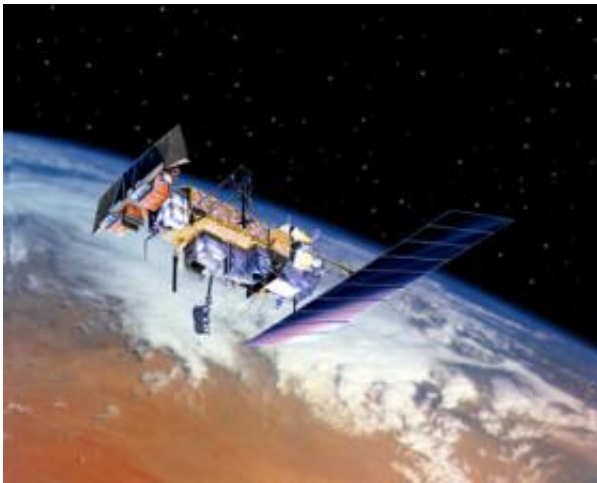


NASA, NOAA set to launch NOAA-N Prime satellite

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Artistic rendition of NOAA-N Prime Satellite. Credit: Lockheed Martin

NASA is preparing to launch NOAA'S latest polar-orbiting operational environmental satellite, called NOAA-N Prime, providing an essential resource for NOAA's weather forecasts and improving the U.S. search and rescue operations.

NOAA-N Prime is scheduled to lift off from Vandenberg Air Force Base in Calif., on February 4, at 5:22 a.m. EST (2:22 a.m. PST).

"Within the U.S. and around the world there is a growing demand for reliable coverage and accurate data from satellites that can tell what's happening in the environment," said Mary Kicza, assistant administrator

for NOAA's Satellite and Information Service. "Launching NOAA-N-Prime will help meet the demand."

As it orbits the Earth, NOAA-N Prime will collect data about the Earth's surface and atmosphere that are vital inputs to NOAA's weather forecasts. NOAA-N Prime has imaging and sounding capabilities that are broadcast around the world and recorded on board for playback over the NOAA and European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellite ground stations. Space weather instruments provide data useful for warnings of solar winds that may impair communications, damage satellites and power systems, and affect astronaut safety.

NOAA-N Prime has instruments that support the Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking System (SARSAT), part of the international satellite system that includes the Russian provided satellites (COSPAS). Since SARSAT was established in 1982, NOAA polar-orbiting satellites have been detecting emergency distress beacons set by aviators, mariners and individuals in remote locations and relaying them to ground stations so that rescue teams may be dispatched. More than 24,500 lives have been saved through the satellite based Search and Rescue system to date.

"NASA is proud of our many years of successful collaboration with NOAA in building and launching these polar orbiting satellites," stated Wayne McIntyre, the NASA's NOAA-N Prime Project Manager. "The success of this mission will provide a healthy polar constellation for continuous data products until the follow-on program launches."

NOAA-N Prime will replace NOAA-18 in a 2:00 p.m. local solar time orbit as the primary afternoon spacecraft. NOAA-N Prime will carry the same primary instruments as NOAA-18 plus an Advanced Data Collection System and an improved Search and Rescue Processor provided by France. NOAA-N Prime will be renamed NOAA-19 after

achieving proper orbit.

NOAA manages the polar-orbiting operational environmental satellite program and establishes requirements, provides all funding and distributes environmental satellite data for the United States. NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., procures and manages the development and launch of the satellites for NOAA on a cost reimbursable basis.

Twenty-one days after it is launched, NASA will transfer operational control of NOAA-19 to NOAA. NASA's comprehensive on-orbit verification period is expected to last approximately 45 days after launch.

Source: NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center

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