

Orbiting Carbon Observatory Set for Feb. 24 Launch

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On Launch Complex 576-E at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, NASA's Orbiting Carbon Observatory, OCO, upper stack is lowered toward the Stage 0 motor of the Taurus XL vehicle. Image credit: NASA/Randy Beaudoin

(PhysOrg.com) -- The Orbital Sciences Taurus XL rocket set to launch NASA's Orbiting Carbon Observatory is now fully assembled at Launch Complex 576-E at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

The vehicle's upper stack -- consisting of the payload's protective fairing and Stages 1, 2 and 3 -- was installed Feb. 18 atop Stage 0, which has been in place at the launch pad since Jan. 29.

Liftoff is scheduled for Feb. 24 at 1:51:30 a.m. PST (4:51:30 a.m. EST).

The OCO is a new Earth-orbiting mission sponsored by NASA's Earth System Science Pathfinder Program. The spacecraft will collect precise global measurements of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the Earth's atmosphere. Scientists will analyze OCO data to improve our understanding of the natural processes and human activities that regulate the abundance and distribution of this important greenhouse gas. This improved understanding will enable more reliable forecasts of future changes in the abundance and distribution of CO₂ in the atmosphere and the effect that these changes may have on the Earth's climate.

Provided by NASA

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