

Launch of European gravity probe delayed

March 16 2009



A computer-generated image of the GOCE satellite. The launch of a pioneering European satellite intended to measure Earth's gravity field was delayed due to technical problems and will take place on March 17.

The launch of a pioneering European satellite designed to map Earth's gravity field was delayed due to technical problems and will take place Tuesday, Russia's Khrunichev Space Centre said.

"The [launch](#) was delayed until the back-up date, tomorrow. The reasons are being checked. It is due to technical reasons connected to the ground services," a spokesman for the centre said.

He explained there was no problem with the rocket or the [European Space Agency](#) (ESA) probe, known as the [Gravity](#) field and steady-state [Ocean Circulation](#) Explorer, or [GOCE](#).

A spokesman at the European Space Agency's Centre for Earth Observation in Frascati, Italy, near Rome, confirmed the delay.

"The service tower did not pull back" automatically, as it should have, he told journalists.

GOCE has suffered several delays since its original launch date of September 10 from the Plesetsk cosmodrome, 800 kilometres (500 miles) north of Moscow.

The satellite's launcher is a Rockot, derived from a Russian intercontinental ballistic missile and operated by a joint venture between EADS Astrium and the Khrunichev Space Centre.

Part of ESA's "Earth Explorer" programme initiated in 1999, GOCE's mission is to deepen understanding about fundamentals of the planet -- its atmosphere, oceans, biosphere and interior.

Scientists say it will be especially useful in gathering data about climate change, and its impact on Earth.

(c) 2009 AFP

Citation: Launch of European gravity probe delayed (2009, March 16) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-03-european-gravity-probe.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.