

Free Spirit: Longer Rover Tests Beginning

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Rover team members at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., on July 24, 2009, discuss the next step in preparing for a new phase in testing of possible moves for getting NASA's Mars rover Spirit out of a sandtrap on Mars.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Mars rover team members have begun a new phase of testing at JPL -- using longer-duration experiments -- in their preparations for driving Spirit again on Mars.

They have completed assessments of individual maneuvers, using the test rover in a box of sloped, soft [soil](#) that simulates conditions at the patch of Martian ground called "Troy," where Spirit's wheels have dug themselves hub-deep. Tests beginning today are using combinations of the individual maneuvers and longer-duration drives. These tests will evaluate a full escape strategy for Spirit.

With the test rover temporarily removed from the box on Friday, July 24, the [rover](#) team members renewed the test setup. They tamped the soil in the uphill half of the box with more pressure than the soil on the

downhill side. This was done to offer a closer simulation to the conditions at Troy, where Spirit's wheels have not churned up the soil as much on the uphill side.

At Troy, meanwhile, [Spirit](#) is continuing to use all of its tools to examine the environment around it.

Provided by JPL/NASA ([news](#) : [web](#))

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