

Free Spirit Testing Nearing Completion

July 31 2009



Mars Exploration Rover team members continued longer-duration test runs this week, driving the test rover forward and uphill in a crab-like position. Pictured are Matt Van Kirk with Sharon Laubach.

Mars rover engineers at JPL are winding down testing of different escape maneuvers using a test rover in a sand box filled with soil to mimic the Martian surface. It is possible that in early August the first extraction attempts with Spirit rover, which is dug-in on Mars, might take place.

This week, longer-duration test runs continued, and the team drove the rover several meters, or yards, forward and uphill in a crab-like position. These long-duration drives will continue through the end of next week.

Meanwhile, observations from the Mars Climate Sounder instrument on NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter indicate to scientists that a large regional storm is developing. Right now the dust storm is not near Spirit or its twin, Opportunity, but scientists will continue to monitor it as it

develops. Since [Mars](#) is still in the dust storm season, it is possible (and perhaps even probable) that the storm will continue to grow over the next few days.

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

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