

New animation depicts next Mars rover in action

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This artist concept features NASA's Mars Science Laboratory Curiosity rover, a mobile robot for investigating Mars' past or present ability to sustain microbial life. Curiosity is being tested in preparation for launch in the fall of 2011. Image Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

(PhysOrg.com) -- Although NASA's Mars Science Laboratory will not leave Earth until late this year nor land on Mars until August 2012, anyone can watch those dramatic events now in a new animation of the mission.

The full, 11-minute animation, shows sequences such as the spacecraft

separating from its [launch vehicle](#) near Earth and the mission's rover, Curiosity, zapping rocks with a laser and examining samples of powdered rock on Mars. A shorter, narrated version is also available below.

Curiosity's landing will use a different method than any previous Mars landing, with the rover suspended on tethers from a rocket-backpack "sky crane."

The new animation combines detailed views of the [spacecraft](#) with scenes of real places on Mars, based on stereo images taken by earlier missions.

"It is a treat for the 2,000 or more people who have worked on the Mars [Science Laboratory](#) during the past eight years to watch these action scenes of the hardware the project has developed and assembled," said Mars Science Laboratory Project Manager Pete Theisinger at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif. "The animation also provides an exciting view of this mission for any fan of adventure and exploration."

Provided by JPL/NASA

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