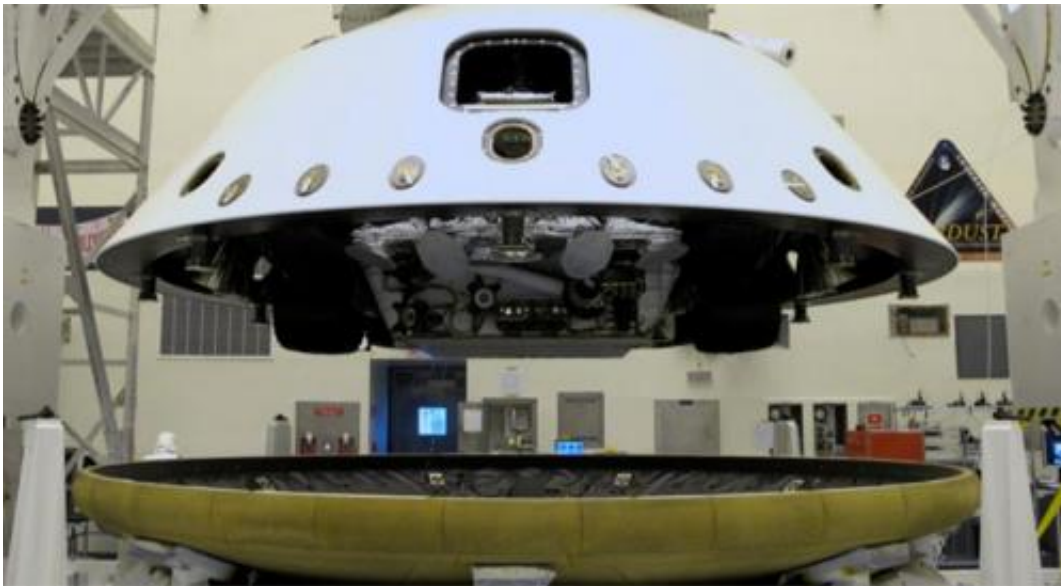


Mars Science Laboratory meets its match in Florida

October 6 2011



At the Payload Hazardous Servicing Facility at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, the "back shell powered descent vehicle" configuration, containing NASA's Mars Science Laboratory rover, Curiosity, is being placed on the spacecraft's heat shield. Image Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

(PhysOrg.com) -- In preparation for launch later this year, the "back shell powered descent vehicle" configuration containing NASA's Mars Science Laboratory rover, Curiosity, has been placed on the spacecraft's heat shield.

The matchup was performed by technicians at NASA's [Kennedy Space](#)

[Center](#) in Florida.

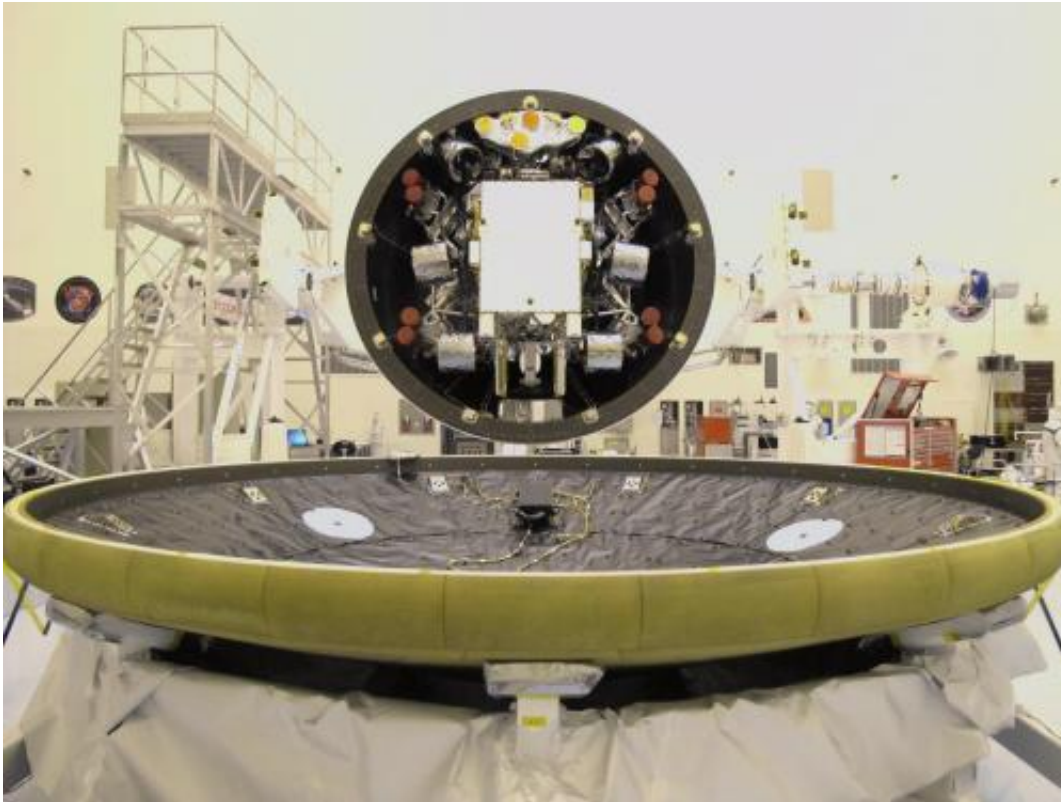
The heat shield and the spacecraft's back shell form an aeroshell that encapsulates and protects the rover from the intense heat it will experience during the final leg of the trip to Mars-the friction-filled descent through the [Martian atmosphere](#).



At the Payload Hazardous Servicing Facility at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, the "back shell powered descent vehicle" configuration of NASA's Mars Science Laboratory is being rotated for final closeout actions. Image Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

The mission is scheduled for launch from [Cape Canaveral Air Force Station](#) during the period from Nov. 25 to Dec. 18. Arrival at Gale Crater on Mars is expected in August 2012.

After arrival, the Curiosity rover will investigate whether the landing region has had environmental conditions favorable for supporting microbial life and favorable for preserving clues about whether life existed.



At the Payload Hazardous Servicing Facility at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, the "back shell powered descent vehicle" configuration, containing NASA's Mars Science Laboratory rover, Curiosity, is being rotated for final closeout actions. The flat, circular object in the foreground of the image is the spacecraft's heat shield. Image Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

Provided by JPL/NASA

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