NOAA's Jason-3 spacecraft ready for launch

January 15 2016

Artist's rendering of Jason-3. Credit: NASA

Jason-3, an international mission led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to continue U.S.-European satellite measurements of the topography of the ocean surfaces, is scheduled for launch from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on

Sunday, Jan. 17. Liftoff aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg's Space Launch Complex 4 East is targeted for 10:42:18 a.m. PST (1:42:18 p.m. EST) at the opening of a 30-second launch window. If needed, a backup launch opportunity is available on the Western Range on Jan. 18 at 10:31:04 a.m. PST (1:31:04 p.m. EST).

Jason-3 will maintain the ability to monitor and precisely measure global sea surface heights, monitor the intensification of tropical cyclones and support seasonal and coastal forecasts. Data from Jason-3 will support scientific, commercial and practical applications related to ocean circulation and climate change. Additionally, Jason-3 data will be applied to fisheries management, marine industries and research into human impacts on the world's oceans.

The mission is planned to last at least three years with a goal of five years.

Jason-3 is a four-agency international partnership consisting of NOAA, NASA, the French Space Agency CNES (Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales) and EUMETSAT (the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites). Thales Alenia of France built the spacecraft.

NOAA, in collaboration with the European partners, is responsible for the Jason-3 mission. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, is responsible for NASA Jason-3 project management. NASA's Launch Services Program at the agency's Kennedy Space Center in Florida provides launch management. SpaceX of Hawthorne, California, is NASA's launch service provider of the Falcon 9 rocket.

Provided by Jet Propulsion Laboratory