

Rocket lights sky as it carries satellites from California

December 23 2017



The contrail from a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is seen in the sky Friday, Dec. 22 2017, in Apple Valley, Calif. The launch was more than 200 miles from Apple Valley yet was still brilliantly visible. The Falcon 9 booster lifted off from coastal Vandenberg Air Force Base, carrying the latest batch of satellites for Iridium Communications. (James Quigg/The Daily Press via AP)

A reused SpaceX rocket carried 10 satellites into orbit from California on Friday, leaving behind a trail of mystery and wonder as it soared into

space.

The Falcon 9 booster lifted off from coastal Vandenberg Air Force Base, carrying the latest batch of satellites for Iridium Communications.

The launch in the setting sun created a shining, billowing streak that was widely seen throughout Southern California and as far away as Phoenix.

Calls came in to TV stations as far afield as San Diego, more than 200 miles south of the launch site.

Cars stopped on freeways in Los Angeles so drivers and passengers could take pictures and video.

The Los Angeles Fire Department issued an advisory that the "mysterious light in the sky" was from the rocket launch.

Jimmy Golen, a sports writer for The Associated Press in Boston who was in Southern California for the holidays, said he and other tourists saw the long, glowing contrail while touring Warner Bros. studio in the Los Angeles suburb of Burbank.

"People were wondering if it had something to do with movies, or TV or a UFO," he said. "It was very cool."

The same rocket carried Iridium satellites into orbit in June. That time, the first stage landed on a floating platform in the Pacific Ocean. This time, the rocket was allowed to plunge into the water.



The contrail from a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is seen from Burbank, Calif., more than 100 miles southeast from its launch site in Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., on Friday, Dec. 22, 2017. A reused SpaceX rocket carried 10 satellites into orbit from California on Friday, leaving behind a trail of mystery and wonder as it soared into space. The launch in the setting sun created a shining, billowing streak that was widely seen throughout Southern California and as far away as Phoenix. (AP Photo/Jimmy Golen)

It was the 18th and final launch of 2017 for SpaceX, which has contracted to replace Iridium's system with 75 updated satellites. SpaceX

has made four launches and expects to make several more to complete the job by mid-2018.

The satellites also carry payloads for global aircraft tracking and a ship-tracking service.



In this photo provided by Javier Mendoza, the contrail from a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is seen from Long Beach, Calif., more than 100 miles southeast from its launch site Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., on Friday, Dec. 22, 2017. A reused SpaceX rocket has carried 10 satellites into orbit from California, leaving behind it a trail of mystery and wonder as it soared into space. The Falcon 9 booster lifted off from coastal Vandenberg Air Force Base, carrying the latest batch of satellites for Iridium Communications. (Javier Mendoza via AP)



The contrail from a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is seen from Pasadena, Calif., about 150 miles east from its launch site in Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., on Friday, Dec. 22, 2017. A reused SpaceX rocket has carried 10 satellites into space from California, leaving behind it a trail of mystery and wonder. The Falcon 9 booster lifted off from coastal Vandenberg Air Force Base shortly before 5:30 p.m. Friday. It carried the latest batch of satellites for Iridium Communications. (AP Photo/John Antczak)



The contrail from a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is seen from Pasadena, Calif., about 150 miles east from its launch site in Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., on Friday, Dec. 22, 2017. A reused SpaceX rocket has carried 10 satellites into space from California, leaving behind it a trail of mystery and wonder. The Falcon 9 booster lifted off from coastal Vandenberg Air Force Base shortly before 5:30 p.m. Friday. It carried the latest batch of satellites for Iridium Communications. (AP Photo/John Antczak)



The contrail from a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is seen from Pasadena, Calif., about 150 miles east from its launch site in Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., on Friday, Dec. 22, 2017. A reused SpaceX rocket has carried 10 satellites into space from California, leaving behind it a trail of mystery and wonder. The Falcon 9 booster lifted off from coastal Vandenberg Air Force Base shortly before 5:30 p.m. Friday. It carried the latest batch of satellites for Iridium Communications. (AP Photo/John Antczak)



A Hair Salon worker photographs the light display of SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket launch, Friday, Dec. 22 2017, in Apple Valley, Calif. The launch was more than 200 miles from Apple Valley yet was still brilliantly visible. The Falcon 9 booster lifted off from coastal Vandenberg Air Force Base, carrying the latest batch of satellites for Iridium Communications. (James Quigg/The Daily Press via AP)

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