

Fact Sheet

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EOS Aqua Overview

Most long-term environmental change slips into our lives unnoticed. Then comes the shock of recognition: the rainy season is longer, the trees are blooming earlier, what were once freak storms have become routine. What's going on here? When did this happen?

The Earth Observing System (EOS) Aqua, formerly the Earth Observing System PM (EOS PM), will help us better understand the causes and effects of global change. Data from its scientific instruments will allow scientists to begin to piece together answers to some fundamental questions: What natural and human forces are at work? How do they interact? What can we predict? How can we prepare? What can we prevent?

Aqua is one of a series of orbiting EOS platforms that are central to NASA's Earth Science Enterprise, a long-term study of the planet and its processes. The EOS program comprises remote sensing spacecraft, a data distribution system and international, multi-disciplinary teams of researchers. Its goal: provide a scientific basis for understanding the scope, dynamics and implications of global change.

Scheduled for launch in 2002, Aqua will collect climate-related data. Its on-board sensors will measure clouds, precipitation, atmospheric temperature/moisture content, terrestrial snow, sea ice, and sea surface temperature during its six-year mission. Flying in low-Earth orbit, Aqua will pass over the same position each afternoon, allowing the comprehensive measurements needed to assess long-term change.

Northrop Grumman is building EOS Aqua and integrating its NASA-provided science instruments. The spacecraft is based on Northrop Grumman's modular, standardized T330 bus, a design with common subsystems easily scalable to the mission-specific needs of this and future Earth-observing missions. Comfortable weight, power and footprint margins readily accommodate payload replacement/refinement without impacting the basic design or the development schedule.

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