

Ball Aerospace Completes Integration of NASA's IXPE Observatory, Begins Testing

IXPE will measure the polarization of cosmic x-rays to study exotic objects in the universe

BROOMFIELD, Colo., Jan. 29, 2021 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Ball Aerospace recently completed the spacecraft and payload assembly integration of NASA's Imaging X-Ray Polarimetry Explorer (IXPE) space-based astrophysics observatory at its Boulder, Colo. facility. Ball will now begin environmental testing of the integrated observatory, which includes all instruments and the spacecraft bus.

Scheduled to launch later this year, once on orbit, IXPE will measure the polarization of cosmic X-rays to improve our understanding of the fundamental physics of extreme and exotic objects in the universe, such as black holes.

"It is truly a pleasure to work with an integrated team that includes government, industry, academia and international partners on a mission that will gather exciting and important science, supported by Ball's commitment to delivering science at any scale," said Dr. Makenzie Lystrup, vice president and general manager, Civil Space, Ball Aerospace. "Moving IXPE into environmental testing is an important step gearing up towards launch this year as it ensures the observatory will be able to withstand the effects of the launch into space."

IXPE is a Small Explorer, or SMEX mission, which is part of NASA's Astrophysics Explorer Program. The IXPE mission is led by NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, with support from Ball Aerospace, the Italian Space Agency (ASI), Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics at University of Colorado Boulder and other partners. Dr. Martin C. Weisskopf, NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, is the principal investigator for the mission.

Ball is responsible for providing the IXPE spacecraft, mechanical and structural elements of the payload, observatory assembly, and integration and test. The spacecraft for IXPE is based on Ball's smallest Ball Configurable Platform (BCP) model. Ball built a similar BCP for NASA's recently completed Green Propellant Infusion Mission (GPIM), which was safely deorbited on October 13, 2020, burning up during re-entry into the atmosphere, leaving no trace of space debris. Ball also built two additional BCP small satellites that are currently performing on orbit: STPSat-2, which launched in November 2010, and STPSat-3, which launched in November 2013. The two STP satellites were built for the U.S. Air Force Space Test Program's Standard Interface Vehicle (STP-SIV) project.

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