

Ball Aerospace Delivers NASA's X-Ray Observatory to Kennedy Space Center for Launch

The Imaging X-Ray Polarimetry Explorer will study exotic objects in the universe, including black holes

BROOMFIELD, Colo., Nov. 10, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- NASA's Imaging X-Ray Polarimetry Explorer (IXPE), built by Ball Aerospace, safely arrived Friday at Cape Canaveral in Fla. A collaboration between Ball, NASA, and the Italian Space Agency (ASI), IXPE is an astrophysics observatory set to launch from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in December.

Once on orbit, IXPE will measure the polarization of cosmic X-rays to improve our understanding of the fundamental physics of extreme objects in the universe, such as neutron stars, quasars and supermassive black holes. IXPE will tackle such mysteries as the sources of magnetic fields, how they formed, and the inner workings of celestial objects, including whether a black hole is spinning and the rate of spin. These answers will provide valuable insight into how the universe works.



"It has been exciting to be part of a program that is going to provide new and important insights into the formation of the universe by observing some of its rarest and most mysterious celestial objects," said Dr. Makenzie Lystrup, vice president and general manager, Ball Aerospace. "Of course, there is still a lot of work to be done upon its arrival at Kennedy, but like every part of this program, we are looking forward to continuing to work hand-in-hand with our government and academic partners to ensure success before, during and after launch."

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 in Huntsville, Alabama, with support from Ball Aerospace, ASI, Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics (LASP) at University of Colorado Boulder and other partners. Dr. Martin C. Weisskopf is the principal investigator for the mission.

Ball Aerospace provided the IXPE spacecraft, mechanical and structural elements of the payload, observatory assembly, and integration and test. The spacecraft is based on the smallest Ball Configurable Platform (BCP) model. As part of Ball Aerospace's commitment to sustainability, a similar BCP was developed for NASA's Green Propellant Infusion Mission (GPIM).

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