Ball Aerospace Supports Critical Design Review of NASA's SPHEREx Mission

BROOMFIELD, Colo., Feb. 23, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- Ball Aerospace supported completion of critical design review (CDR) for NASA's Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization and Ices Explorer (SPHEREx) mission. Ball will now move forward with building the telescope and spacecraft.

In addition to designing and building the spacecraft and telescope, Ball Aerospace is responsible for conducting system integration and test, supporting integration of the spacecraft onto a launch vehicle and commissioning of the spacecraft after launch, which is currently scheduled for no earlier than June 2024 and no later than April 2025.

"After completing separate CDRs for the spacecraft last June and for the telescope in November, this overall mission CDR is the final step before full assembly begins," said Dr. Makenzie Lystrup, vice president and general manager, Civil Space, Ball Aerospace. "We are excited to move forward on developing the tools that will help NASA and the scientific community gain a better understanding of the universe's formation."

SPHEREx is the first all-sky near-infrared spectral survey. It will produce four complete all-sky maps during its two-year mission to study the nature of physics that drove cosmic inflation in the early universe and help to answer questions such as: *How did the universe begin? H*ow *did galaxies begin*? *What are the conditions for life outside of the solar system?*Dr. James Bock of the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) is the principal investigator for SPHEREx and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) is the managing center.

The SPHEREx observatory is considered a medium-sized satellite, about the size of a subcompact car. The spacecraft is based on the customizable and proven line of Ball Configurable Platform (BCP) buses. A smaller version of the BCP served as the basis for NASA's Imaging X-Ray Polarimetry Explorer spacecraft, which launched in December on its mission to observe polarized X-rays from extreme objects, such as neutron stars, stellar and supermassive black holes.

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