Science satellites scour skies for Santa

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Los Alamos instruments to track the famous elf

LOS ALAMOS, N.M., December 20, 2007–International audiences (young and young-at-heart) will be closely eyeing the Santa-tracking satellite technology of Los Alamos National Laboratory in the coming week. Beginning at 6 a.m. Monday, Dec. 24, Los Alamos scientists will use two advanced science satellites to mark the path of the elfin traveler, noting his travels at http://SANTA.LANL.GOV online.

“We expect Santa to arrive in Northern New Mexico around midnight, Mountain Standard Time, on Christmas Eve," said Diane Roussel-Dupré of Space Data Systems (ISR-3). “As he travels the world, crossing time zones, he's chasing midnight, hour after hour, and delivering his treasures to families everywhere.”

While various scientific theories exist on how Santa manages to achieve his high-speed deliveries, none have been proven, although ion shielding, personal magnetic fields and multi-dimensional travel concepts show promise.

Laboratory space scientists will use a combination of technologies to monitor Santa's progress as he speeds through the skies. They can call upon a satellite tracking dish, located in Los Alamos, in addition to using sensors on the Laboratory's FORTE and Cibola Flight Experiment satellites. The U.S. Air Force also will use its nine tracking stations around the world to help monitor the sleigh and its eight tiny reindeer.

“We like to think of our efforts as another way to help spread glad tidings,” Roussel-Dupré said. “This is our present to the communities of Northern New Mexico and the world.”

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