Science satellites seek Santa

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Reindeer, sleigh and presents all visible to high-tech tracking tools

LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, December 16, 2009—Audiences of all ages the world over will closely eye the product of the Lab's Santa-tracking satellite technology in the coming week. Beginning at 6 a.m. Thursday, December 24, Los Alamos scientists will use two advanced science satellites to mark the course taken by the elfin traveler, at http://SANTA.LANL.GOV online.

"We expect Santa to arrive in Northern New Mexico around midnight, Mountain Standard Time, on Christmas Eve," said scientist 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 has been proven, although ion shielding, personal magnetic fields, and multidimensional 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 families everywhere."

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