Lab scientists track Santa's magical journey

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LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, December 20, 2010—For the 55th consecutive year, millions of people all over the world over will be able to keep tabs on Santa as he treks around the globe delivering presents to good girls and boys. And scientists from Los Alamos National Laboratory are again part of the effort! Los Alamos trackers will use state-of-the-art technology to mark the course taken by Old St. Nick and his reindeer; visit http://santa.lanl.gov beginning at 6 a.m. December 24 to see his journey.

"We expect Santa to arrive in Northern New Mexico around midnight, Mountain Standard Time, on Christmas Eve," said scientist Diane Roussel-Dupré of the Lab's Space Data Systems group.

Los Alamos is supporting Santa trackers at North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), who've been following Santa on his Christmas journey since 1955. The Santa tracking program began after a youngster mistakenly called the Continental Air Defense Command Operations Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado,

and the commander on duty told the child Santa's whereabouts. That began the tradition of Santa tracking, which was carried on by NORAD when it was formed in 1958.

The program, which has become an annual favorite for kids big and small, hit the Internet in 1998 and receives millions of visitors from hundreds of countries around the world.

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, and use sensors on the Lab'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 reindeer.

In addition to the Lab's website, http://santa.lanl.gov, Santa's journey can also be followed by visiting www.noradsanta.org, through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and TroopTube by typing @noradsanta into the search engine, by calling 1-877-446-6723, or by e-mailing noradtrackssanta@gmail.com.

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