

# NASA Launches Communication Satellite

MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer



CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — [NASA](#) [1]

launched a new communication satellite Wednesday to stay in touch with its space station astronauts and relay more Hubble telescope images.

An unmanned Atlas V rocket blasted into the starry night sky carrying the Tracking and Data Relay Satellite.

This is the 11th TDRS satellite to be launched by NASA. The space agency uses the orbiting network to communicate with astronauts living on the International Space Station.

The first TDRS spacecraft flew in 1983; it recently was retired along with No. 4. The second was lost aboard space shuttle Challenger in 1986; Monday marked the 27th anniversary of the launch disaster.

This newest third-generation TDRS carries the letter K designation. Once it begins working, it will become TDRS-11. It will take two weeks for the satellite to reach its intended 22,300-mile-high orbit. Testing will last a few months.

NASA estimates the satellite costs between \$350 million and \$400 million.

Another TDRS spacecraft, L in the series, will be launched next year.

NASA wants at least seven TDRS satellites working in orbit at any one time. The one launched Wednesday will make eight.

Online:

NASA: [http://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/tdrs/index.html](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/tdrs/index.html) [1]

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