

BCBR Article

Ball Aerospace-built satellite launched

By Beth Potter

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BOULDER - A new weather and environmental research satellite made by Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp. launched Friday morning on a Delta II rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

Boulder-based Ball Aerospace designed and built the satellite as well as an ozone mapping instrument on the satellite. It was the eighth spacecraft to be built by Ball Aerospace using the same core design, which has been used in orbit for more than 50 years, according to company information.

NASA's projected final investment is \$895 million for the spacecraft, the related NASA instruments and the launch. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which has a substantial presence in Boulder, and the U.S. Air Force, contributed an estimated \$677 million to the project.

The United Launch Alliance in Denver oversaw the project. The satellite will monitor weather conditions and gather climate data to improve scientists' knowledge of Earth's systems, said Jim Sponnick, United Launch Alliance vice president of mission operations.

"Today's successful NPP launch is a critical first step in demonstrating our country's next-generation, earth-observing satellite system," Sponnick said in a statement.

The satellite is expected to extend and improve on climate data records established by a previous fleet of satellites launched by NASA on things like clouds, oceans, vegetation, ice, solid Earth and atmosphere.