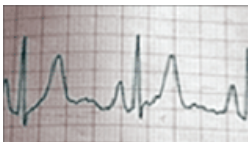


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NASA finds significant water on moon

AP Associated Press



Associated Press / November 14, 2009

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LOS ANGELES - It turns out there's lots of water on the moon, at least near the lunar south pole.

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The discovery announced yesterday was made from an analysis of data from a spacecraft the National Aeronautics and Space Administration intentionally crashed into the moon last month.

"Indeed, yes, we found water. And we didn't find just a little bit; we found a significant amount," said Anthony Colaprete, the mission's principal investigator at NASA's Ames Research Center.

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The lunar impact kicked up at least 25 gallons of water, and that's only what scientists can see, Colaprete said.

Having an abundance of water on the moon would make it easier to set up a base camp by providing drinking water and an ingredient for rocket fuel.

The latest finding is further evidence that the moon is not a dry, barren place and could reinvigorate scientific interest.

"This is not your father's moon," said Greg Delory of the University of California, Berkeley, who was not part of the research. "Rather than a dead and unchanging world, it could in fact be a very dynamic and interesting one."

He said the next focus should be to figure out where the water comes from and how much of it there is.

NASA's Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite last month slammed into one of moon's permanently shadowed craters near the south pole to study whether ice was buried underneath.

The mission actually involved two moonshots. First, an empty rocket hull slammed into the Cabeus crater. A shepherding spacecraft recorded the drama live before it also crashed into the same spot four minutes later.

Though scientists were overjoyed with the plethora of data beamed back to Earth, the mission was a public relations dud. Space enthusiasts who stayed up all night to watch the spectacle did not see the promised debris plume in the initial images. ■

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