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NASA launches rocket in hope of finding water on the Moon

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SPOKANE - NASA is launching an attack on the Moon's surface with a rocket Friday morning, but the lunar assault isn't some form of celestial space war, rather a high-tech search for water.

The target is a large crater on the moon's south pole. NASA believes that their target is a good prospect for finding water because it is a shady crater, and Spokane resident and NASA Ambassador Joe Bruce wants you to see this cosmic explosion for yourself. He'll have his telescope set up to capture the impact at 4:31 a.m. at the Hamblen Park Presbyterian Church at Crestline and Thurston on Spokane's South Hill.

Last June an Atlas V blasted a pair of satellites into space and toward the Moon. On Friday, the now empty booster rocket assumes its new role of acting like an artillery shell. The rocket weighs about as much as a full sized SUV and, on command, will slam into the Lunar surface.

"With this 6,000 pound rocket body coming at you at 6,000 m.p.h., there's going to be a fairly substantial impact and a lot of energy released," Bruce said.

When the rocket hits, the impact is going to add a small crater to the moon's surface and dislodge about 350 tons of lunar landscape into space. About four minutes later the shepherding space craft is going to fly into that plume of ejected material and use infrared cameras to test it for the presence of water.

Before this experiment astronauts have only been able to scratch the moon's surface when it comes to digging, while this rocket should auger in about 12 feet deep.

"As asteroids impact the surface, water is deposited in these craters and then covered with soil," Bruce said. "So in these craters there may be fairly substantial quantities of water ice."

This water could have multiple significant uses, according to NASA, such as making rocket fuel and provide drinking water for astronauts.

"If they could mine it from the surface that reduces the amount of weight they have to fly to the moon and they can put other things on there or use a smaller rocket," Bruce said.



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