

SPACE SHUTTLE
STS-66/ATLANTIS



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As a continuing element of NASA's Mission to Planet Earth program, nine environmental instruments will fly into space on the STS-66 mission that are part of a continuing study of our atmosphere and the sun's influence on it. The Atmospheric Laboratory for Applications and Research (ATLAS-3) primary payload is made up of seven instruments that have flown on previous ATLAS missions along with two new instruments.

Space Shuttle Atlantis is scheduled to lift off from Launch Pad 39B into an orbit of 189 statute miles high with an inclination of 57 degrees to the Earth's equator. The ten-day, 20-hour mission is scheduled to end with a landing at Kennedy Space Center.

The STS-66 emblem depicts Space Shuttle Atlantis launching into Earth orbit to study global environmental change. The Shuttle is trailed by gold plumes representing the astronaut symbol and is superimposed over the Earth, much of which is visible from the flight's high inclination orbit.

The six-person STS-66 astronaut crew is made up of three space flight veterans and three rookies. The Mission Commander is Donald R. McMonagle, who will be on his third shuttle flight. Curtis L. Brown, Jr. is the Pilot on his second flight into space. Payload Commander Ellen Ochoa has the most in-flight experience with the ATLAS instruments - her second space flight mission. Mission Specialists Scott E. Parazynski, a medical doctor, Joseph R. 'Joe' Tanner and Jean-Francois Clervoy are all first-time flyers. Clervoy, a French citizen, is also a European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut.

As in previous ATLAS missions, the crew will operate in two 12-hour shifts to provide continuous operation of the instruments. The crew will deploy the CRISTA-SPAS satellite, as illustrated on the crew patch circling the Earth, early in the mission. The autonomous spacecraft will then fly to an area about 20 to 44 miles behind Atlantis for about a week before it is brought back onboard the orbiter for its return to Earth.