

Training Begins For Four-Month Mars Simulation Mission In Arctic

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Tuesday, February 20, 2007 – In preparation for their unprecedented four-month Mars mission simulation this summer, Commander Melissa Battler will lead a seven-member crew through two weeks of intense training at the Mars Desert Research Station (MDRS) in southern Utah beginning February 18. The crew will learn to work as a team with each other and with supporting groups, while familiarizing themselves with the procedures necessary for their full-scale mission this summer in the high Canadian Arctic.

This summer's mission will take place from May through August of 2007 at The Mars Society's Flashline Mars Arctic Research Station (FMARS) on Devon Island in the high Canadian Arctic. This landmark expedition will prepare for eventual human missions to the Red Planet by conducting scientific exploration under nearly all of the constraints that astronauts on an actual Mars mission will one day face. Crew members include Battler; Executive Officer Matt Bamsey; Chief Engineer James Harris; Interdisciplinary Scientist Kim Binsted; Engineer Ryan Kobrick; Biologist Kathryn Bywaters; Geologist Simon Auclair; and alternate Emily Colvin.

"We are about to embark on an extremely challenging, potentially dangerous simulated Mars mission to the Canadian Arctic," said Battler. "In order to achieve crew survival and mission success, it is critical that we anticipate all challenges, and begin to prepare for them. We must train together, bond as a team, and learn to trust each other, starting now."

The training will consist of several phases, and will involve all of the supporting groups that will remotely assist the crew in their upcoming mission. The crew will receive wilderness first aid training, and the crew will spend several days working with both the Engineering Team and the Science Advisory Group (SAG), the latter of whom will be directing their scientific work in the Arctic. The most important piece of the training will be an entire week spent with the crew in full simulation, with all of the constraints of the Arctic mission in place.

By working with the SAG prior to the actual mission at FMARS, the crew hopes to increase its scientific productivity while on-site in the Arctic. The concept, tested on previous Mars Society expeditions, is that crews who train together prior to a mission are able to work together more effectively due to increased familiarity with each other.

The crew will be posting daily reports from MDRS, and later from FMARS, on the Internet at <http://www.fmars2007.org>. Additional material will be posted to that site as mission preparations progress.

The SAG is led by co-Principal Investigators Shannon Rupert of New Mexico State University and Chris McKay of NASA Ames. This team of 11 world-class scientists has coordinated the orchestration of this complex mission, and supported the selection of the FMARS crew.

The Mars Society is a private international grassroots organization dedicated to furthering the case for human exploration of Mars. Since its founding in 1998, The Mars Society's strong commitment to both outreach and research has put it at the forefront of Mars exploration proponents, with 7000 members in 40 countries. The organization currently operates multiple world class research facilities which investigate many technical and human factors associated with human space exploration. Significant political and public outreach has led to several hundred meetings with U.S. congressional offices, and has otherwise reached hundreds of millions of people through various media outlets.

For more information, please contact Kevin Sloan, or visit <http://www.fmars2007.org>.

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