

CNES FLASH INFO

NOAA takes over Jason-2 satellite operations

After four months of tests and qualification of the entire satellite and the ground segment by the Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES), the French space agency, command and control operations for the Jason-2 ocean altimetry satellite were handed over to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on 29 October

The handover is a major step in Jason-2 operations. NOAA will now carry out routine operations on the satellite and, by the end of November, process the operational data received by its ground stations and interface with users. It will also archive and distribute all scientific products.

EUMETSAT, the European Meteorological Satellite Organisation, will also process the operational data received by its own ground station in Usingen, Germany, and interface with users. It will also archive and distribute operational products by the end of November. Usingen will be remotely accessed and commanded from NOAA's Suitland operation center.

CNES will process 'off-line' data sets, validate and distribute them and interface with users. It will evaluate the performance of the Poseidon-3 altimeter and Doppler Orbitography and Radio-positioning Integrated by Satellite (DORIS) data. CNES will also archive and distribute all scientific products. It will remain the centre of technical expertise for all non-routine operations, as well as continuing to perform orbit determination and to evaluate satellite performance together with the manufacturer, Thales Alenia Space. It will step in if necessary if the satellite goes into 'safehold mode', an operation in which the satellite is 'put to sleep' if an anomaly is detected in any of its equipment.

NASA will evaluate the performance of the Global Positioning System, laser and radiometry instruments, and validate 'off-line' scientific products.

Jason-2 is exploited jointly by CNES and EUMETSAT in Europe and NASA and NOAA in the United States and is a good example of a programme undertaken in a research and development setting (such as the NASA/CNES Topex-Poseidon project and the experimental Jason-1 altimetry satellite) moving into a fully operational mode.