



Iridium Reports Progress on "Iridium NEXT" Hosted Payloads Initiative

Studies Indicate Iridium NEXT is Well-Positioned to Provide Cost-Effective Resource for Earth Observation and Remote Sensing Missions

BETHESDA, Md., Nov. 19, 2009 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Iridium Communications Inc. (Nasdaq:IRDM) reports that it has completed numerous technical studies, working with independent technology partners, that demonstrate the feasibility of hosting earth observation and remote sensing payloads on its planned/proposed next-generation satellite constellation, Iridium NEXT.

"Independent, detailed technical studies led by Iridium for the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) have confirmed that Iridium's planned next-generation constellation of 66 low-earth orbiting (LEO) cross-linked satellites can provide a unique and unprecedented capability for a wide range of remote sensing missions for monitoring global climate data and other environmental data," said Dr. Jose Achache, director of GEO, an intergovernmental organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. "GEO is creating a framework for governments and industry to explore how new data-providing sources, such as Iridium NEXT, can support the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) by delivering required water and climate observations."

"The earth observation community has a unique window of opportunity, starting now, to augment our ability to capture earth climate, weather and environmental data through hosted payloads on Iridium NEXT," said Achache. "It's important to act quickly to ensure the secondary payloads can be included on the Iridium NEXT satellites, which will be launched between 2014 and 2016."

In addition to the GEO studies, Iridium has completed several technical studies for U.S.-based space agencies examining specific hosted payload possibilities with Iridium NEXT. These include Global Positioning System radio occultation (GPSRO) to measure global atmospheric temperature and humidity profiles; broadband radiometers for measuring the earth's radiation budget; solar total and spectral irradiance measurements; radar altimetry to detect sea surface and ice heights; multi-spectral imagers for ocean and land color, deforestation and desertification; and to validate the feasibility of commercial monitoring of ozone levels in the earth's atmosphere.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) is also investigating the feasibility of hosted payloads on the Iridium NEXT constellation to support requirements for space situational awareness.

"Hosted payloads on Iridium NEXT represent public-private partnership at its best," said Lee Demity, Iridium's executive vice president for Iridium NEXT. "By sharing the infrastructure with commercial satellites, public agencies can realize unprecedented visibility of the earth's surface and atmosphere at a small fraction of the cost of developing and deploying dedicated earth observation satellites."

Lockheed Martin and Thales Alenia Space are competing to become the prime contractor for Iridium NEXT and both companies are designing hosted payloads accommodation in their proposed Iridium NEXT satellite design. Iridium plans to announce its Iridium NEXT prime contractor selection in the coming months.

About Iridium Communications Inc.

Iridium Communications Inc. (www.iridium.com) is the only mobile satellite service (MSS) company offering coverage over the entire globe. The Iridium constellation of low-earth orbiting (LEO) cross-linked satellites provides critical voice and data services for areas not served by terrestrial communication networks. Iridium serves commercial markets through a worldwide network of distributors, and provides services to the U.S. Department of Defense and other U.S. and international government agencies. The Company's customers represent a broad spectrum of industry, including maritime, aeronautical, government/defense, public safety, utilities, oil/gas, mining, forestry, heavy equipment and transportation. Iridium has launched a major development program for its next-generation satellite constellation, Iridium NEXT. The company is headquartered in Bethesda, MD, U.S.A. and trades on the NASDAQ Global Market under the ticker symbols IRDM (common stock), IRDMW (\$7.00 warrants), IRDMZ (\$11.50 warrants) and IRDMU (units).

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