

AIRBUS SUCCESSFULLY TESTS DISPENSER STRUCTURE FOR GRACE-FO SATELLITES

News / Manufacturer



Airbus successfully tests the dispenser structure that will hold the twin satellites GRACE-FO (GRACE = Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment, FO= Follow-On) during their launch. Once the satellites are integrated in place, the assembly to the launcher or fit check test is carried out. This test is used to demonstrate the mechanical and electrical compatibility between the satellites, the dispenser, and the launcher. Airbus (Friedrichshafen / Germany) is developing and manufacturing the GRACE-FO satellites on behalf of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Airbus in Spain, a specialist in multi-payload structures for multiple launches, developed this satellite dispenser for the German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ, Potsdam) in under one year. This structure was developed in classical configuration with a central carbon fibre cylinder with the satellites held in place by four hold down and release mechanisms which each have springs, connectors, and necessary harnesses.

JPL, located in Pasadena, California and managed by Caltech on behalf of NASA, in partnership with GFZ will send both GRACE-FO research satellites into a polar orbit at an altitude of around 500 km and at a distance of 220 km apart. This is a follow-on to the GRACE mission, which has been successfully operating since 2002. Both satellites will continually take very exact measurements of their separation distance, which changes depending on the Earth's gravity. In this way, scientists are able to map the Earth's gravitational fields.

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