

Dyer Observatory to webcast live images of first-ever manmade impact with comet July 4

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—NASA will be setting off fireworks of a different kind this July 4, when it plans to slam an 820-pound projectile into a 10-mile wide rocky, icy comet. Vanderbilt University's Dyer Observatory will provide live streaming images of the impact from the Astronomical League's International Space Station Amateur Telescope near Tuscon, Ariz., and will provide live online commentary by Vanderbilt physicist Robert O'Dell, former chief scientist for the Hubble Space Telescope.

The webcast will be available at: www.sonicfoundry.com.

"This is a great opportunity to study comets because we really don't know if they are large rocks in space or sand dunes in space," O'Dell, distinguished research professor of physics and astronomy, said. "Punching a hole in one will hopefully tell us which model is correct."

A NASA spacecraft named Deep Impact will fire the projectile at the comet, Tempel 1, at approximately 12:52 a.m. CDT on the morning of July 4. The spacecraft will collect images and other data to learn more about the composition of comets and their role in the formation of the solar system.

Very few places on Earth will be positioned to view the collision, a reason why Sky & Telescope magazine contacted the Astronomical League and Vanderbilt to capture images from the Arizona site. Vanderbilt provides the control center that operates the Arizona telescope in partnership with the Astronomical League, an organization of 240 local amateur astronomical societies from across the United States, and [Arizona Sky Village, which houses the telescope.](#)

Nashville-based Technical Innovation (<http://www.tillc.biz/>) will capture the live images and make them available for online viewing using Sonic Foundry's Mediasite™ automated rich media recording and publishing systems. An archive of the event will remain online for 30 days. The webcast is being co-hosted by Vanderbilt University, the Astronomical League (<http://www.astroleague.org>) and Sky & Telescope magazine (<http://SkyandTelescope.com>).

For more information about Deep Impact, visit: <http://deepimpact.jpl.nasa.gov>.

For more Vanderbilt news, visit: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/news>.

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