

MESSENGER Update – July 27, 2004

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<http://messenger.jhuapl.edu/webcam/annotatedimages/annotated–20040727.html>

MESSENGER Mission News

July 27, 2004

Going, Going, Gone!

MESSENGER is now sitting atop the Boeing Delta II launch vehicle at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station's Space Launch Complex 17. This set of Webcam images from July 20 takes you through MESSENGER's final moments at the Astrotech Space Operations facility, where the team had been processing and testing the Mercury-bound spacecraft since March.

At upper left, with MESSENGER wrapped in two sheets of protective plastic, members of the Boeing team install a section of the "can" that protects the spacecraft and the attached, third stage of the launch vehicle during transport. Four sections are assembled around the base of the third stage; the rest of the can fits over the spacecraft in one piece. The 15-foot-tall can itself was then double bagged for additional protection.

After the team rolled MESSENGER out the door – seen in the next three images – the spacecraft made the 22-mile trip to the launch pad, crawling at 5 miles an hour on a four-wheeled transporter. The top protective bag around the can was removed once the spacecraft arrived at the launch pad; the other came off once the team sealed the clean room that encloses the spacecraft on top of the launch vehicle.