

Tucson Citizen

Impact of Mars Lander mission on Tucson: \$50M, lots of publicity

[ALAN FISCHER](#)

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The University of Arizona-led Phoenix Mars Lander mission will explore a distant planet while offering big economic benefits much closer to home.

About \$50 million of the mission's \$420 million budget will remain in the Tucson area, said Peter Smith, the mission's principal investigator.

"The world is coming to Tucson," Smith said. "This is where the exploration of Mars is happening this summer."

The Phoenix project has employed researchers, technicians and support staff since NASA funded the mission and Smith began assembling the team in August 2003.

The Tucson-based mission will seek evidence of water and elements of life on Mars by analyzing soil and ice samples scooped from the planet's northern arctic region.

Two of the mission's scientific instruments - the Thermal and Evolved-Gas Analyzer and the Surface Stereo Imager - were built locally, said Smith, senior research scientist at the UA Lunar and Planetary Laboratory.

TEGA will use eight tiny ovens to heat Martian soil and ice samples to determine chemical characteristics of the material.

The SSI camera will offer researchers panoramic 3-D views of the planet from 7 feet above the surface.

The Lander will arrive on Mars at 4:38 p.m. Sunday after a 422-million-mile journey that began Aug. 4.

More than 400 people from around the world have worked on the project, but mission

officials could not say how many were local.

About 150 researchers, technicians and administrative personnel from around the world will be based in Tucson this summer during the mission's three months of Martian ground operations.

Such high-tech jobs offer the local economy a boost, said Marshall J. Vest, director of the Economic and Business Research Center at UA's Eller College of Management.

"These are high-paying, knowledge-based kinds of jobs, exactly the kinds of jobs the economic development community strives to create," Vest said.

"I think it is important to consider this work is being done here in Tucson," Vest said. "There aren't many universities around the country that have bragging rights to the team that is putting a lander on Mars."

The Phoenix mission's local economic impact extends beyond measuring the dollars spent here, said Vera Pavlakovich-Kochi, senior regional scientist with the Eller College.

"The power of attracting talent and making the news and putting us on the map cannot be directly measured," she said. "These are qualitative impacts that very often are outside the scope of our pure economic research."

Go online for Mars coverage at [tucsoncitizen.com/mars](http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/mars).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Phoenix Mars Lander mission summer outreach program: <http://150.135.110.195/tours.php>
To schedule a tour, contact phoenix-epo@lpl.arizona.edu or 626-9661.

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