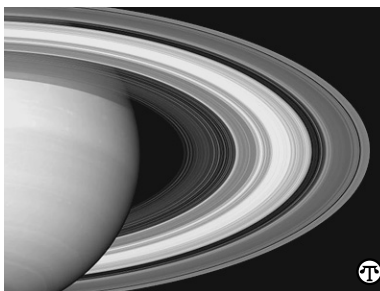


ENERGY MATTERS

Nuclear Powers Space Missions

(NAPS)—Nuclear technology, used to power space missions, is helping explore what primitive Earth may have been like billions of years ago.

Equipment powered by radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs) has been collecting images and data from Titan, a moon of Saturn, whose atmosphere is similar to young Earth. Studying this information could tell us if Titan is able to support some form of life.



Nuclear-powered generators enabled this image of Saturn to be captured and sent light-years away to Earth. They can operate successfully in extreme environments independently.

The RTG's ability to produce electricity on its own and perform long missions light-years away shows how far we have come in using alternative-power sources. Three RTGs, which are equivalent to nine 100-watt lightbulbs, will be able to fuel the equipment past its 2008 mission end date.

These generators convert heat from nuclear fuel into electricity. Since their first use in 1961 for a navigation satellite, RTGs have been involved in more than 25 space missions, including the Voyager and Apollo missions.

Visit the American Nuclear Society at www.ans.org/pi/np/rtg to learn more about nuclear space technology.

Did You Know?

Nuclear generators that are powering space missions may one day help answer questions about Earth. Called radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs), these generators have been in use since 1961, when the U.S. Navy first launched a navigation satellite. They convert heat from nuclear fuel into electricity. For more information, visit the American Nuclear Society Web site at www.ans.org/pi/np/rtg.

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