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I-4 Americas satellite prepares to enter commercial service

16-12-2008 - Preparations are nearing completion for the entry into commercial service on 7 January 2009 of the new Inmarsat-4 (I-4) satellite covering North and South America.

The I-4 Americas satellite, the third in the constellation, was launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on 18 August 2008, paving the way for the introduction of global coverage for Inmarsat's suite of mobile voice and broadband data services.

Commercial service on the new I-4 Americas satellite is currently expected to begin at approximately 09:00 UTC on 7 January 2009 from its in-orbit location at 98 degrees West.

Optimal data rates

The I-4 Americas spacecraft is positioned more directly over the region than the I-4 F2, the satellite currently serving the region. This makes it easier to point a BGAN terminal at the satellite and, coupled with a higher concentration of spot beams over the landmass, will provide optimised data rates.

Also, for the first time, network coverage will be extended to include parts of Western Canada and Alaska.

As part of the process, BGAN, FleetBroadband and SwiftBroadband traffic will be transferred from the I-4 F2 to the I-4 Americas satellite, starting at approximately 08:00 UTC on 7 January. This will require a short outage, which is currently expected to last for about one hour.

Re-point terminals

At the end of the outage, BGAN users in the region will need to re-point their terminals from the I-4 F2 satellite at 53 degrees West to the I-4 Americas satellite at 98 degrees West. The latest version of BGAN LaunchPad, available for download from the Inmarsat website, provides coverage maps designed to help end-users re-point their antennas.

Following the scheduled entry into commercial service of the I-4 Americas satellite on 7 January, Inmarsat subsequently needs to reposition its two I-4 sister satellites in order to optimise the network and prepare for the introduction of global coverage, currently planned for 24 February.

While Inmarsat is making every effort to minimise any impact on customers, the repositioning process will require two service outages in January and February affecting a small number of broadband and satellite phone service users in two limited geographical areas.

The planned schedule of outages is as follows:

I-4 F2: 7 January - 2 February 2009

- **BGAN** - in Iceland, Ireland and parts of West Africa, the UK and Greenland
- **FleetBroadband** - in a narrow strip of the east Atlantic Ocean
- **SwiftBroadband** - in a narrow strip of the east Atlantic Ocean.

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