Another Iridium NEXT Milestone Achieved With Successful Qualification of Its Unique Solar Panel Power System

MCLEAN, Va., Sept. 23, 2014 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Iridium Communications Inc. (Nasdaq:IRDM) today announced the completion of an extensive testing program for qualification of its new solar panel design for the Iridium NEXT constellation. The innovative array that powers the Iridium NEXT satellites, expected to begin launching in 2015, contains four solar panels and will span 9.4 meters when fully extended, developing more than 2 kilowatts of power over a demanding charging cycle in Iridium's low earth orbit. The panel was developed by Spectrolab, the world's leading manufacturer of high-efficiency multijunction space solar cells and panels, and Mitsubishi Electric Corporation (MELCO), a premier supplier of lightweight solar panel substrates. These companies are part of the Iridium NEXT Mission Team, led by Iridium's prime contractor and European satellite manufacturer, Thales Alenia Space.

The solar arrays are powered by new, larger triple-junction (XTJ) solar cells manufactured from six-inch wafers which yield 50 percent more solar cell surface area than cells used in Iridium's current constellation and deliver higher performance, while reducing costs.

"The successful completion of qualification testing for the solar panel design marks yet another important milestone on our journey to launching Iridium NEXT," stated Scott Smith, chief operating officer, Iridium Communications Inc. "The innovation at the heart of the solar panels demonstrates how we're fundamentally rethinking the design of every aspect of our constellation with improved efficiency, performance and longevity in mind."

Working closely with Spectrolab, the new design was put through a grueling life test and qualification program to ensure it works to specification using representative sections of the actual panels. The design verification test represented every mechanical and electrical configuration and was tested with a simulation of the rigorous low earth orbit charging environment into which the arrays will be deployed.

The solar array was tested to 1.5 times its planned lifespan in space to ensure it can meet and exceed the expected lifetime of the satellite. The solar cells were put through 75,000 thermal cycles, each one representing the Iridium NEXT satellite's movements in and out of the sun's radiating heat as it orbits the Earth.

The Iridium NEXT satellite network will consist of 66 in-orbit satellites and a number of in-orbit spares. The constellation is expected to begin launching in 2015 and will offer continued high quality service for Iridium customers as well as greater bandwidth and data speeds when fully operational in 2017.

For more information on Iridium NEXT, go to www.iridium.com.

About Iridium Communications Inc.

Iridium® is the only mobile voice and data satellite communications network that spans the entire globe. Iridium enables connections between people, organizations and assets to and from anywhere, in real time. Together with its ecosystem of partner companies, Iridium delivers an innovative and rich portfolio of reliable solutions for markets that require truly global communications. The company has a major development program underway for its next-generation network — Iridium NEXT. Iridium Communications Inc. is headquartered in McLean, Va., U.S.A., and its common stock trades on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the ticker symbol IRDM. For more information about Iridium products, services and partner solutions, visit www.iridium.com.

Forward-Looking Statements

Statements in this press release that are not purely historical facts may constitute forward-looking statements as defined in the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. The Company has based these statements on its current expectations and the information currently available to us. Forward-looking statements in this presentation include statements regarding the development and capabilities of the Iridium NEXT constellation, including the expected life of the satellite and solar panels and expected Iridium NEXT deployment and launch schedule. Forward-looking statements can be identified by the words "anticipates," "may," "can," "believes," "expects," "projects," "intends," "likely," "will," "to be" and other expressions that are predictions or indicate future events, trends or prospects. These forward-looking statements involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors that may cause the actual results, performance or achievements of Iridium to differ materially from any future results, performance or achievements expressed or implied by such forward-looking statements. These risks and uncertainties include, but are not limited to, uncertainties regarding Iridium NEXT development and functionality, potential delays in Iridium NEXT deployment, and the company's ability to maintain the health, capacity and content of its current satellite constellation, as well as general industry and economic conditions, and competitive, legal, governmental and technological factors. Other factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those indicated by the forward-looking statements include those factors listed under the caption "Risk Factors" in the Company's Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2014, filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("the SEC") on May 1, 2014, as well as other filings Iridium makes with the SEC from time to time. There is no assurance that Iridium's expectations will be realized. If one or more of these risks or uncertainties materialize, or if Iridium's underlying assumptions prove incorrect, actual results may vary materially from those expected, estimated or projected. Iridium's forward-looking statements speak only as of the date of this press release, and Iridium undertakes no obligation to update forward-looking statements.

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