



## **Iridium NEXT Constellation Passes Critical Milestones; On Schedule for Planned Launch in 2015**

MCLEAN, Va., March 12, 2012 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- With the planned commencement of the launch of its next-generation satellite constellation, Iridium NEXT, less than 36 months away, Iridium (Nasdaq:IRDM) announces the completion of the satellite preliminary design review phase of the program. This phase concludes the preliminary design and specifications for all elements of the satellite system, including payload, main mission antenna, feeder links and cross links.

"The foundation for Iridium NEXT satellite design is complete," said Scott Smith, executive vice president, Iridium NEXT. "By successfully finalizing the first phase of the program design process, our engineers and partners, under the direction of our prime contractor Thales Alenia Space, have now begun the detailed design phase, which includes building prototype hardware of all elements, including satellites, antennas and ground infrastructure. We have an amazing, innovative group of partners -- the Iridium NEXT Mission Team, as we call it -- and we are confident in the tremendous progress we have made on the world's most significant commercial space program. Iridium NEXT is on track to further Iridium's position as a vital player in the global communications infrastructure. Our organization and its ecosystem of partners around the world are very excited about the influence this tremendous, next-generation network will have on continuing to connect organizations and people in ways never before thought possible."

By completing the preliminary design phase of Iridium NEXT satellites, Iridium and its partners will now begin constructing engineering model units that will be used to verify the design and performance of the system prior to full construction start in 2013. Iridium expects to complete its constellation (Space Segment) Critical Design Review Phase in early 2013.

Among the prototypes under construction are the constellation's feeder links and cross links, which will be responsible for communicating to ground stations and between satellites, respectively. Payload and main mission antennas will also be built and tested to ensure reliability, resilience and compatibility.

The following time line outlines plans for the future critical milestones in the evolution of the Iridium NEXT constellation:

2012: Detailed hardware and software design culminating in the Space Segment Critical Design Review (CDR) in early 2013

2013: Initial space and launch vehicle hardware production and extensive performance testing to ensure it meets its requirements

2014: Satellite and launcher/dispenser level qualification testing and the initiation of satellite low-rate production in preparation for the first launch

2015: First year of launching and integrating Iridium NEXT satellite vehicles into the Iridium® constellation; transition to full-rate production

2016: Second year of launching and integrating the Iridium NEXT satellite vehicles

2017: Planned complete constellation replacement with Iridium NEXT fully operational

The world's largest commercial satellite constellation, the Iridium network, is the "engine" behind the communications innovation delivered by the company and its ecosystem of 275 partners. Their collaboration around the world continually develops and delivers new solutions that extend connectivity in places and ways never before imagined with coverage everywhere on Earth. Covering the 90 percent of the Earth that cellular and terrestrial networks don't cover, Iridium enables two-way, real-time, low-latency voice and data communications services everywhere on the planet through small, reliable devices and applications that change the way organizations and people are able to operate and live.

#### **About Iridium Communications Inc.**

Iridium Communications Inc. 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 ever-expanding 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 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](http://www.iridium.com).

The Iridium Communications Inc. logo is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=10426>

#### **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. Forward-looking statements include statements regarding the development and deployment of the Iridium NEXT system. Other 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 the health, capacity and content of Iridium's current satellite constellation and the development of and transition to Iridium NEXT, 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-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") on March 6, 2012. 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.*

CONTACT: Liz DeCastro

Iridium Communications Inc.

+1 (703) 287-7421

[liz.decastro@iridium.com](mailto:liz.decastro@iridium.com)

Christine DiBartolo

FTI Consulting

+1 (312) 553-6720

[christine.dibartolo@fticonsulting.com](mailto:christine.dibartolo@fticonsulting.com)

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