

AS OF 3:11PM PST ON MAY 15 2009, NASA'S SPITZER SPACE TELESCOPE HAS RUN OUT OF COOLANT — THE LIQUID HELIUM KEEPING ITS INSTRUMENTS COOL — AND ENTERED ITS NEXT PHASE OF EXPLORATION: THE SO-CALLED "WARM MISSION"

The Spitzer Space Telescope has been chilled by liquid helium for 5.5 years, keeping its instruments at a cold enough temperature to remain sensitive to the heat in the universe that produces infrared light. Spitzer's lack of coolant will not, however, prevent it from continuing to operate, although its mission will change slightly. The telescope will remain cool enough to keep two of its infrared channels functional, allowing it to make ongoing observations about exoplanets, explore the rate at which the universe is expanding, and to look far into space at very distant objects.

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