Explorer Reset For Launching

A beacon Explorer satellite that was to have been placed in orbit last month was rescheduled today for launching from Wallops Island, April 28.

The 132-pound spacecraft, orbiting between the altitudes of 620 and 670 miles, will carry equipment to map the earth’s gravitational field.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration said a secondary task will be to support a 36-nation cooperative survey of the electron content of the ionosphere.

The satellite, called BE-C for Beacon Explorer-C, will use the train-whistle IR doppler shift effect of an orbiting radio signal to map irregularities in the earth’s gravitational field.

To a person standing near a railroad track, the whistle of a passing train is heard at a higher frequency as the train approaches, and at lower frequencies as the train speeds away.

Measurement of the frequency change makes it possible to calculate the speed of the moving object. Irregularities in the earth’s shape cause the orbit of a satellite to vary, and measurement of the shift of radio signals from the beacon spacecraft will permit analysis of these irregularities.

The spacecraft, expected to have an operating lifetime of about a year, will be launched by a four-stage Scout rocket.

The scheduled launching on March 30 was postponed to correct a technical problem associated with one of the experiments.