

MARTIAN DUST STORM -- This first picture of a dust storm (arrow) on Mars was received by U.S. space technicians from the Viking-2 orbiter. The turbulent, bright dust cloud, more than 300 kilometers across, is in the great Argyre Basin, one of several enormous depressions created by the impact of large asteroids early in the planet's history. It is apparently moving eastward under the influence of strong winds that also create condensate lee-wave clouds to the west of the basin. Previous Viking images and infrared data have shown that during winter the floor of Argyre is covered with carbon dioxide frost -- the edge of the south polar ice cap. In this view, taken at the end of the southern winter, the bright polar cap has begun to retreat.

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