

# NASA: progress studying shuttle tank foam

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NASA engineers say they are closer to resolving the problem of large chunks of foam insulation falling off space shuttle external fuel tanks during launch.

A team of National Aeronautics and Space Administration scientists is making recommendations addressing the factors that may have contributed to foam loss when the space shuttle Discovery was launched in July.

The next shuttle mission also is on Discovery, but NASA says it has not yet set a launch date. However, the space agency has a May 3-23 launch window as a target for the mission.

Shuttle workers likely will replace and modify areas of insulation on the external tank where foam came loose during July's launch.

Space Shuttle Program Manager Wayne Hale said a series of tests during the next several weeks will help further clarify the tank issues. "I think we're beginning to have our hands well around the technical problems we have and we are defining the fixes necessary to fly again," he said.

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