

NASA Successfully Tests Space Shuttle Main Engine

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For the first time since Hurricane Katrina, NASA's Stennis Space Center, Miss., returned to its primary business Tuesday, testing space shuttle main engines.

Engineers successfully test-fired an engine for 520 seconds; the time it takes a shuttle to reach orbit. Tuesday's engine test is an indication that Stennis and the region are working toward recovering from the storm.

Tuesday's test was a continuation of a certification series on the Advanced Health Management System, which monitors the engine's performance. It enables the engine to shut down if unusual vibrations are detected in the turbopump.

It's an upgrade that provides a significant improvement for lower risk for shuttle main engines. Other engine parts were tested and certified, such as a fast-response temperature sensor.

"We are very pleased to be testing again," said Gene Goldman, manager of the Space Shuttle Main Engine Project Office at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Ala.

"It's a testament to the dedication and character of the Stennis workforce that they are able to test so soon after hurricanes Katrina and Rita." Approximately 25 percent of Stennis' 4,500 employees lost their homes, and the majority had varying degrees of damage.

Stennis has tested and proven flight-worthy every space shuttle main engine since the first in 1975.

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