

SpaceX Sets New Launch Date For Falcon

March 2 2006



SpaceX has reset the tentative launch window for the maiden flight of Falcon 1 to March 20 through 25.

"The gating items are receiving a shipment of liquid oxygen from Hawaii and switching out the 2nd stage tank," SpaceX founder and CEO Elon Musk told SpaceDaily.com in an e-mail. "Obviously, long term operations on (Kwajalein Atoll) will require that we install a state-of-the-

art, high reliability LOX plant on island."

In the meantime, Musk said, the company intends to proceed through first launch with LOX shipments from Hawaii "and whatever output we can generate from the sad, old clunker of a LOX plant that we currently own."

He said the launch crew is also replacing the second stage tank following discovery of a small leak. "Fortunately, a Falcon second stage tank just barely fits through the door of a standard cargo airplane (no C-17 required), so the flight is relatively inexpensive and readily available."

Musk said fixing the leak in the tank being shipped back is not a huge task, but he added it is not something easily done far away from the factory, so countdown procedures have been modified to prevent such leaks from developing in the future.

The static firing of the Falcon's engine that was performed during the last countdown attempt was really helpful as a preflight systems checkout, he said, "so we will be doing one again three or four days before the next countdown." He said that date is most likely March 17.

"In addition, we are doing another systems review with DARPA, AF and NASA in early March."

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Citation: SpaceX Sets New Launch Date For Falcon (2006, March 2) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-03-spacex-date-falcon.html>

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