

# NASA: Discovery launch on schedule

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NASA officials say the scheduled launch of the shuttle Discovery is still expected in July, despite several accidents and technical problems.

Discovery has flown only one mission since the Columbia disaster in February 2003 and there are continuing problems with fuel-tank insulating foam, which doomed the Columbia and was noted during Discovery's return-to-flight mission last year, The New York Times reported Tuesday.

There were so many accidents at the Kennedy Space Center during the past winter, the director of the center ordered all work halted for two hours while workers were lectured on safety procedures. The next day a worker was killed in a fall from a warehouse roof.

Nevertheless, NASA Administrator Michael Griffin last week said work

was proceeding toward a July 1 lift-off.

Discovery initially had been scheduled to fly in May, but NASA postponed that launch to complete modifications to the shuttle's large external fuel tank, as well as deal with other technical issues.

The Times said NASA must launch at least two shuttle flights this year to get back on schedule building the International Space Station before the shuttle fleet is retired in 2010.

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