

NASA and Zero-G Agree on Regular Shuttle Runway Use

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NASA and Zero Gravity Corp. of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., announced today the company -- known as ZERO-G -- will begin to regularly use the space shuttle's runway and landing facility at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Fla. This agreement is the result of a successful pilot program to expand runway access for non-NASA activities.

Beginning with its first flight for the public on June 24, ZERO-G will conduct up to 280 weightless flights annually from the Kennedy facility using a modified Boeing 727-200 aircraft, called G-Force One. NASA has agreed to permit as many as seven ZERO-G flights a week under a Space Act Agreement that provides for reimbursement of the agency's runway and support costs.

In November, ZERO-G became the first company to participate in the pilot program to open the 15,000-foot runway for non-NASA use. The agreement is the first for regular non-NASA flights from the space center. NASA hopes this agreement will broaden the public's interest in spaceflight and increase awareness of its importance.

"We are extremely pleased to have ZERO-G sign on as a regular user of our Shuttle Landing Facility," said Kennedy Space Center Director Jim Kennedy. "This is the ideal place for activities that share the experience of space flight with the general public."

In addition to exposing passengers to the weightlessness astronauts experience while orbiting Earth, the roller coaster-like parabolic flights

also allow flyers to experience the same gravity conditions one would feel on the moon and on Mars, providing a glimpse of what future NASA crews will encounter.

"Conducting our flights from the Kennedy Space Center -- one of the most internationally-recognized and frequented venues for space travel and education -- is a perfect match for ZERO-G," said Dr. Peter H. Diamandis, chairman and chief executive officer of ZERO-G. "This is a meaningful step in the growth and expansion of our service as we continue to bring the fun and exhilaration of weightless flight to the general public."

The scheduling of ZERO-G flights from Kennedy will not interfere with NASA missions or other activities.

Source: NASA

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