

NASA Gives Atlantis a 'Go' for Liftoff on Aug. 27

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With the final launch rehearsal completed, the STS-115 crew gathers on the 215-foot level of the fixed service structure on Launch Pad 39B. From left are Pilot Christopher Ferguson, Mission Specialists Heidemarie Stefanyshyn-Piper and Joseph Tanner, Commander Brent Jett, and Mission Specialists Steven MacLean and Daniel Burbank. Photo credit: NASA/Cory Huston

At a press conference late Wednesday, following the two-day flight readiness review at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, NASA's senior managers announced an Aug. 27 launch date for mission STS-115, resuming construction of the International Space Station.

NASA Administrator Michael Griffin said, "This was another great review and I'm looking forward to a great launch."

The Shuttle Mission Management Team conducts the review two weeks prior to the opening of the launch window for each space shuttle mission. The group conducts a comprehensive evaluation of all activities and elements necessary for the safe and successful performance of shuttle mission operations -- from the prelaunch phase through post-landing -- including the readiness of the vehicle, flight crew and payloads.

"We had a tremendous amount of discussion from all the folks involved, we covered a variety of topics. The challenge of the ISS assembly is really huge it is a very busy timeline. It really impressed me with how much the teams have prepared for this," said William Gerstenmaier, associate administrator for space operations.

The launch date is at the opening of the launch window, which extends until Sept. 13. NASA is once again limiting the launch to daylight hours to allow for extensive photography of the external tank during ascent.

"Team Atlantis is extremely happy to be at the launch pad and to have a date set. They are feeling really good right now," said NASA Launch Director Mike Leinbach.

With this mission, NASA is ready to get back to building the International Space Station, marking the first time in almost four years that a space station component has been added to the orbiting outpost. That also means the shuttle program is coming up on some of the most challenging space missions ever.

During three spacewalks, crew members of Atlantis will install the P3/P4 integrated truss and a second set of solar arrays on the space

station, doubling the station's current ability to generate power from sunlight and adding 17.5 tons to its mass.

Source: NASA

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