

Atlantis Tank Repairs Continue

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Atlantis sits inside the Vehicle Assembly Building, while repair work continues on the external tank. Photo credit: NASA/Jack Pfaller

The media were invited to Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Wednesday to check out Space Shuttle Atlantis in the Vehicle Assembly Building.

During last week's teleconference NASA program managers discussed the status of repair work to the shuttle's external fuel tank, which was damaged during a Feb. 26 hail storm.

They reported that more testing and analysis are needed to determine if the tank will be used for the upcoming STS-117 flight or whether the tank will be replaced. The teams expect to have the necessary data to make that decision and to establish a target launch date by April 10.

During the STS-117's 11-day mission, the six-member crew will install a new truss segment, retract a set of solar arrays and unfold a new set on the starboard side of the station. Lessons learned from two previous missions will provide the astronauts with new techniques and tools to perform their duties.

Atlantis Commander Rick Sturckow, Pilot Lee Archambault and Mission Specialists Jim Reilly, Patrick Forrester, Steven Swanson and John "Danny" Olivas will continue training at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston as they await a new target launch date.

Source: NASA

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