

# Space Shuttle Atlantis Arrives at Launch Pad

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After safely reaching its launch pad Saturday at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, the space shuttle Atlantis now awaits its next major milestone for the upcoming STS-122 mission. The full launch dress rehearsal is scheduled from Nov. 18 to 20 at Kennedy.

The shuttle arrived at the pad about 11 a.m. EST Saturday on top of a giant vehicle called the crawler-transporter. The crawler-transporter began carrying Atlantis out of Kennedy's Vehicle Assembly Building at 4:43 a.m., traveling less than 1 mph during the 3.4 mile journey. Atlantis achieved hard down and was firmly on the launch pad at 11:51 a.m.

Atlantis is targeted to launch Dec. 6 on an 11-day mission to the International Space Station. The shuttle's seven crew members will deliver the European Space Agency's Columbus Laboratory to the International Space Station and bring a new crew member to the station and return another to Earth.

Atlantis' crew members are Commander Steve Frick, Pilot Alan Poindexter and mission specialists Leland Melvin, Rex Walheim, Stanley Love, and Hans Schlegel and Léopold Eyharts of the European Space Agency. Eyharts will replace current Expedition 16 Flight Engineer Daniel Tani. Eyharts will return to Earth aboard STS-123, which is targeted to launch Feb. 14, 2008. Tani will return to Earth aboard Atlantis. He launched to the station with the STS-120 crew.

The STS-122 astronauts and ground crews will participate in a launch dress rehearsal, known as the terminal countdown demonstration test, or

TCDT. The test provides each shuttle crew with an opportunity to participate in various simulated countdown activities, including equipment familiarization and emergency training. STS-122 is the 121st space shuttle flight, the 29th flight for space shuttle Atlantis and the 24th flight to the station.

Source: NASA

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