

# Space shuttle launch called off, NASA to try again

August 25 2009, By MARCIA DUNN , AP Aerospace Writer

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A furnace burns off extra fuel near the space shuttle Discovery early Monday Aug. 24, 2009 at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Seven astronauts are scheduled to liftoff early tomorrow morning for a trip to the international space station. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

(AP) -- NASA will try again to launch the shuttle Discovery to the international space station on Wednesday after having to call it off early Tuesday because of thunderstorms.

The storms popped up unexpectedly late Monday all around the launch site, and lightning lit up the sky. A strike was reported just five miles from the pad, and then it started to pour. The storms finally eased, but not fast enough.

Launch director Pete Nickolenko waited as long as he could before halting the countdown. The [space shuttle](#) had seven astronauts inside as well as thousands of pounds of space station supplies, including a new treadmill named for TV comedian Stephen Colbert.

"The vehicle and the operations were cooperating, but the local weather unfortunately did not," Nickolenko informed the astronauts.

"When the weather is ready to cooperate, we'll be ready to go," replied commander Rick Sturckow.

Another 30 minutes, and "I think we'd have a real good shot today," said Mike Moses, chairman of the mission management team. But time ran out in the wee hours.

Forecasters put the odds of good launching [weather](#) Wednesday at 70 percent.

Discovery's most prominent payload is NASA's new \$5 million treadmill, which is named after Colbert. He could not attend Tuesday's planned launch, but said in a recorded message that he couldn't be prouder that his treadmill soon will be installed at the space station "to help finally slim down all those chubby astronauts."

"Let's face it, being weightless is mostly just a desperate bid to get away from that bathroom scale every morning," Colbert said. "But you guys and gals are ambassadors to the universe. Don't make us look bad. Put down the astronaut ice cream, tubby. Tubby, tubby, two-by-four, couldn't fit through the air lock door."

Colbert campaigned earlier this year to have a space station room named after him. He won the online vote, but [NASA](#) went with Tranquility, the name of the dry lunar sea in which [Neil Armstrong](#) and Buzz Aldrin

landed 40 years ago this summer. As a consolation prize, Colbert got the treadmill. It's full name is Combined Operational Load Bearing External Resistance Treadmill; it will fly up in more than 100 pieces and won't be put together until sometime next month.

NASA has until the end of August to launch Discovery. Otherwise, it will have to wait for a Japanese cargo ship and Russian Soyuz spacecraft to fly in September. That would push the 13-day shuttle flight into October.

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On the Net:

NASA:

[http://www.nasa.gov/mission\(underscore\)pages/shuttle/main/index.html](http://www.nasa.gov/mission(underscore)pages/shuttle/main/index.html)

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