

NASA puzzled why parachutes failed in rocket test

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Artist concept of Ares I-X rocket. Image Credit: NASA

(AP) -- NASA still isn't sure why two parachutes failed during a test flight of its prototype moon rocket just over a month ago.

The two-minute flight of the Ares I-X rocket went well Oct. 28. But only one of the three main parachutes on the first-stage booster opened properly. That caused the booster to slam harder than intended into the Atlantic Ocean. The booster was badly dented.

An engineering manager, Marshall Smith, said Thursday that one parachute may have inflated too quickly, putting too much load on the system. The flapping parachute lines may have damaged the second parachute, which opened only partially, he said.

Several more months of analysis are needed.

NASA's proposed Ares rocket is supposed to replace the space shuttles and eventually fly astronauts to the [moon](#). But the White House may scrap that plan. In the meantime, the space agency is considering additional flight tests, possibly in 2012 or 2013. The first manned flight of the Ares I rocket is targeted for 2015.

There were a few other snags with the \$445 million flight of the experimental [rocket](#): Some cable connectors did not separate and the final 80 seconds of data on the on-board recorder were lost. Neither of those problems affected the mission, however, officials said.

"It was successful in so many ways, to be honest with you," Smith told reporters. He said he could not pick the single most significant result from the test, but said the navigation and control system worked exactly as predicted. That will be helpful in building the models for future Ares rockets, he noted.

On the Net: [NASA](#): <http://www.nasa.gov/aresIX>

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