

NASA fuels shuttle Atlantis in last-launch test

June 15 2011, By MARCIA DUNN , AP Aerospace Writer

(AP) -- NASA is fueling space shuttle Atlantis. But it's only a test.

The last launch of the shuttle program isn't until July 8. But shuttle managers want to make sure that repairs to the [external fuel tank](#) are good and that no cracks pop up in any support brackets.

Ground controllers began pumping a half-million gallons of super cold fuel into Atlantis' tank Wednesday. The three-hour operation was delayed several hours by thunderstorms that pounded Cape Canaveral on Tuesday. Three lightning strikes were reported near the pad. Preliminary checks show nothing was damaged, although a power circuit went offline.

Last November, fuel tank cracks kept [shuttle Discovery](#) grounded for four months for repairs. The same kind of patches were used for Atlantis.

More information: NASA: <http://www.nasa.gov/shuttle>

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