

SpaceX pushes for mission to space station on next flight

July 27 2011, By Nancy Atkinson



A concept drawing of the Dragon spacecraft approaching the ISS. Credit: SpaceX

NASA and SpaceX have “technically” agreed to allow the Dragon capsule to dock with the International Space Station this fall, according to [SpaceX’s Twitter feed](#). The Dragon capsule is currently – and tentatively — scheduled to launch aboard a Falcon 9 rocket on

November 30, and berth with the ISS 9 days later. Originally, the Dragon was scheduled to just rendezvous and station-keep with the space station on this second flight for Dragon and then dock on a subsequent flight. But after the successful test flight for the first Dragon capsule in Dec. 2010, SpaceX asked NASA to combine the two missions.

“We technically have agreed with SpaceX that we want to combine those flights,” said William Gerstenmaier, NASA’s associate administrator for space operations, speaking at the post-launch press conference for the STS-135 final shuttle mission. “We are doing all the planning to go ahead and have those missions combined, but we haven’t given them formal approval yet.

With today’s Twitter post from SpaceX, it appears things are moving in the direction of making the move official.

SpaceX’s flights are part of NASA’s COTS (Commercial Orbital Transfer Service) program, and by allowing SpaceX to dock with the ISS sooner rather than later would combine COTS II and III flights.

Will Dragon be doing any official cargo transfer? A [NASA](#) experiment called Materials International [Space Station](#) Experiments (MISSE) #8 has a reservation with [SpaceX](#) to fly back to Earth on a Dragon capsule. MISSE is a brief-case sized experiment that tests all sorts of materials like polymers and other composites and coatings, along with hardware such as switches, sensors and mirrors, exposing them to the vacuum of space. The experiment is attached to the outside of the ISS and opened to expose the materials.

To dock with the ISS, the Dragon capsule would need to be equipped with solar arrays and other equipment on board the spacecraft would need to be upgraded from the configuration Dragon had for the Dec. 2010 test flight.

Source: [Universe Today](#)

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