

SwRI suborbital payload specialists move to flight planning phase, release mission patch

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Southwest Research Institute (SwRI) announced in February that it had contracted multiple suborbital flights for its own astronaut payload specialists as part of a larger effort to promote the development of commercial human spaceflight. Preparations for these flights are proceeding and will be flown on a combination SwRI manifest of XCOR Lynx I and Virgin Galactic SpaceShip 2 vehicles. The Lynx I missions will reach altitudes of about 200,000 feet; the SpaceShip 2 missions will reach altitudes near 350,000 feet.

On each flight, SwRI will fly one or two astronaut payload specialists and associated research demonstration payloads. Dr. S. Alan Stern, project principal investigator, and Dr. Daniel D. Durda and Dr. Cathy B. Olkin, project co-investigators, make up the SwRI suborbital payload specialist team.

Payload specialist training and experiment preparations are proceeding on schedule. The three payload specialists have passed the required FAA flight physicals and completed basic [centrifuge](#) and zero-G training. In addition to the initial physical requirements, the three experiment payloads designed to test the ability of suborbital vehicles for scientific applications are now complete.

As the project reaches this milestone, the SwRI flight team also has released its project mission patch, which will be worn on all flights.

"This patch symbolizes both suborbital parabolic flight with its stylized

blue arch trajectory, and the manned nature of the flights with the [constellation Orion](#)," says Stern, associate vice president of the SwRI Space Science and Engineering Division. "SwRI's logo, which has existed for decades and includes the Earth, is also depicted below the suborbital trajectory, as is the American flag, which symbolizes the uniquely American nature of the next-generation suborbital industry."

"This is as exciting as it gets! We're going to be pioneering how to do research using scientists on suborbital spacecraft for the first time," remarked Olkin, an SwRI principal scientist.

Payload specialist trainee and SwRI principal scientist Durda added, "We're excited to now move on from payload construction and functional test to payload calibration, payload-vehicle integration and [flight](#) operations planning — our next [project](#) phase."

Provided by Southwest Research Institute

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