

SpaceX delays space station delivery until January

December 18 2014, by Marcia Dunn



The SpaceX Dragon cargo craft is pictured just prior to being released by the International Space Station's Canadarm2 robotic arm on May 31 to allow it to head toward a splashdown in the Pacific Ocean. Credit: NASA

The space station astronauts will have to wait until next month for their Christmas delivery.

On Thursday, the SpaceX company announced it was delaying this week's planned launch of an unmanned supply capsule until January.

SpaceX spokesman John Taylor said a test firing of the rocket engines earlier this week did not go precisely as planned at the Cape Canaveral launch pad. The company wants to conduct a second test on the Falcon rocket before committing to a launch, he said.

Combined with the Christmas and New Year's holidays, as well as the sun's angles on the space station, the earliest the California-based company can launch is Jan. 6. The liftoff should have occurred Friday, already a few days late.

NASA says the delay will not affect the space station or its six occupants: two Americans, one Italian and three Russians.

The space agency is paying SpaceX and Orbital Sciences Corp. to launch supplies and experiments to the orbiting lab. Orbital's shipments are on hold, however, because of October's launch explosion. The Antares rocket blew up seconds after liftoff.

Orbital Sciences said it will be 2016 before it can launch again with an improved Antares rocket. The Virginia-based company is shifting much of its intended station shipment to an Atlas rocket that would fly from Cape Canaveral sometime later next year. A second Atlas might also be needed to pick up the slack.

More information: SpaceX: www.spacex.com/

NASA: www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/main/index.html

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