

Space center reopens after hurricane, damage in millions

October 11 2016, by Marcia Dunn



This Saturday, Oct. 8, 2016 photo provided by NASA shows damage to the roof of the Beach House during an aerial survey of the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Hurricane Matthew passed to the east of the state on Oct. 6 and 7, 2016. (Cory Huston/NASA via AP)

NASA's Kennedy Space Center reopened for business Tuesday, relying on industrial air conditioners rushed in from around the country in the wake of Hurricane Matthew.

Director Robert Cabana said the damage—mostly ripped-off roofs—is still being tallied, but is in the millions of dollars. He said it would have been much worse had Matthew not weakened and veered slightly offshore Friday as it swept up the Florida coast.

"We were definitely blessed," Cabana, a former space shuttle commander, told reporters.

Among the buildings with roof and water damage: the 1960s-era beach house once used by astronauts for parties and barbecues before launches. Cabana hopes to get it repaired for conferences.

The portable [air conditioning units](#) were brought in after the roof came off the building that serves as the electrical room for air conditioning throughout the main launch area. The switching equipment ended up soaked. Without the new units, employees could not have returned so quickly, Cabana noted. Even so, some workers were displaced. About 8,300 people work at Kennedy.

This time, all of the panels held on the massive Vehicle Assembly Building. Back in 2004, while the space shuttles were still flying, hundreds of panels were blown off the face of the 525-foot-tall structure by Hurricane Frances, creating gaping holes.

Cabana said corrosive fasteners failed back then and were replaced with stainless steel washers and locknuts.



This Saturday, Oct. 8, 2016 photo provided by NASA shows damage to a support building during an aerial survey of the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Hurricane Matthew passed to the east of the state on Oct. 6 and 7, 2016. (Cory Huston/NASA via AP)

"It did its job. The panels look great. We kept them all on," Cabana said.

The launch pad being modified for NASA's future mega rocket held up well, as did the pad being leased by SpaceX.

No flight hardware was damaged, and the planned November launch of a next-generation weather satellite shouldn't suffer too much of a delay.

The space center—which shut down last Thursday to everyone except a 116-person crew—experienced surface winds of 80 mph to 86 mph. Gusts of more than 135 mph were measured at 500 feet.

The local bald eagles also lucked out: Their huge, longtime nest survived in the trees along a tour bus route.

More information: NASA:

www.nasa.gov/centers/kennedy/home/index.html

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Citation: Space center reopens after hurricane, damage in millions (2016, October 11) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-10-space-center-reopens-hurricane-millions.html>

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