

SpaceX poised for Thursday cargo launch to space station

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Technicians prepare the Neutron Star Interior Composition Explorer payload in April 2017 ahead of its delivery to the International Space Station aboard the SpaceX Dragon cargo carrier

SpaceX is poised to blast off its next delivery of food, supplies and science experiments to the astronauts living at the International Space Station on Thursday.

The launch of SpaceX's 11th commercial resupply mission aboard an unmanned Dragon cargo ship is scheduled for 5:55 pm (2155 GMT) on June 1, and will be broadcast live on NASA's website.

If all goes as planned, a Falcon 9 rocket will propel the Dragon into low-Earth orbit, where it will eventually connect with the space station, circling the Earth at a height of some 250 miles (400 kilometers).

The cargo ship should arrive Sunday at 8:30 am (1230 GMT).

It is packed with almost 6,000 pounds (2,700 kilograms) of science research, crew supplies and hardware.

The supplies for special experiments include live mice to study the effects of osteoporosis and fruit flies for research on microgravity's impact on the heart.

The spacecraft is also loaded with solar panels and equipment to study neutron stars.

The weather forecast for Thursday's launch was 70 percent favorable, NASA said.

If the launch is postponed for any reason, another opportunity opens at 5:07 pm (2107 GMT) Saturday, June 3.

The launch will be the 100th from NASA's historic launch pad 39A, the starting point for the Apollo missions to the Moon in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as a total of 82 shuttle flights.

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