

SpaceX crew flight delayed; Musk gets mixed COVID-19 results

November 14 2020, by Marcia Dunn



NASA astronauts, from left, Shannon Walker, Victor Glover, Mike Hopkins and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) astronaut Soichi Noguchi, right, wearing SpaceX spacesuits, stop to pose for a picture as walk out of the Neil A. Armstrong Operations and Checkout Building to depart for Launch Complex 39A during a dress rehearsal Thursday, Nov. 12, 2020, at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., for a scheduled Nov. 14 launch to the International Space Station (Joel Kowsky/NASA via AP)

SpaceX delayed its second astronaut flight by a day because of high wind and weather conditions that could jeopardize the recovery and recycling of the rocket booster, pushing the launch to Sunday.

Friday's postponement news came after SpaceX chief Elon Musk disclosed he had gotten mixed test results for COVID-19 and was awaiting the outcome of a more definitive test.

NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said anyone testing positive for COVID-19 must quarantine under NASA policy and remain isolated. Officials said contact tracing by SpaceX found no link between Musk and any personnel in close touch with the four [astronauts](#), who remain cleared for flight.

"I can assure everyone that we're looking good for the (crew) [launch](#) and all of the critical personnel involved," said SpaceX's Benji Reed, senior director for [human spaceflight](#).

It wasn't immediately known if Musk would be allowed at the Kennedy Space Center launching site even if later tests came up negative.

Norm Knight, a deputy manager at NASA, said the guidelines are rigid for restricting access to astronauts before flight in order to keep them safe and healthy.

"No one's above this access. It doesn't matter if you're Elon Musk or Jim Bridenstine," Knight said at a news conference Friday night. "If you have not met those protocols, or if any of those protocols have been compromised, then we're not going to let you near the crew."



A mockup of the SpaceX crew capsule is seen on display in front of the Vehicle Assembly Building during a news conference at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Friday, Nov. 13, 2020. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

Musk said via Twitter that he tested positive for coronavirus, then negative twice, then positive again. He said he wasn't feeling too well the past few days—sniffles, cough, low fever—but currently had no symptoms.

"So 'Elon Musk Tests Negative for Covid' is an equally correct title," he tweeted.

Musk said his first tests were rapid tests, and he was awaiting the results of lab tests. The 15-minute rapid tests are less sensitive than the lab tests,

which take hours longer to process.

NASA and SpaceX representatives wouldn't say where Musk was Friday, although officials confirmed he was not at Kennedy. His company is based in Southern California, where he makes his home. He was inside Kennedy's Launch Control last May for SpaceX's first astronaut flight last May.

Four astronauts—three Americans and one Japanese—are scheduled to rocket to the International Space Station on Sunday night.



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket with the company's Crew Dragon spacecraft onboard is seen on the launch pad at Launch Complex 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Friday, Nov. 13, 2020. Four astronauts will fly on the SpaceX Crew-1 mission to the International Space Station. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

One of the test pilots on SpaceX's first astronaut flight, Doug Hurley, said he's certain Musk will be involved with the launch—regardless of where he is.

"Knowing Elon the way I do, they will figure out a way for him to be very much connected," Hurley told The Associated Press from Houston.

The upcoming crew flight comes just three months after the end of the [test](#) flight with Hurley and Bob Behnken, both NASA astronauts. The four astronauts are going up for a full space station stay of five to six months. They will be replaced in the spring by yet another crew launched by SpaceX.

The latest launch was bumped a day in order to give SpaceX's booster-landing platform enough time to get into position in the Atlantic, given the rough seas in the wake of Tropical Storm Eta. NASA and SpaceX are especially eager to retrieve this first-stage booster; it will be used for the next crew launch.



Hiroshi Sasaki, right, vice president and director general, Japanese Space Agency Human Spaceflight Technology Directorate speaks as NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine, left, listens during a news conference at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Friday, Nov. 13, 2020. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine, center, speaks during a news conference with astronauts Suni Williams, back left, and Jonny Kim, in front of a mockup of the SpaceX crew capsule at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Friday, Nov. 13, 2020. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



NASA firefighters drive on the road outside the fence near a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, with the company's Crew Dragon capsule attached, sits on the launch pad at Launch Complex 39A Friday, Nov. 13, 2020, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts will fly on the SpaceX Crew-1 mission to the International Space Station scheduled for launch on Nov. 14, 2020 (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, with the company's Crew Dragon capsule attached, sits on the launch pad at Launch Complex 39A Friday, Nov. 13, 2020, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts will fly on the SpaceX Crew-1 mission to the International Space Station scheduled for launch on Nov. 14, 2020 (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)



Photographers set up remote cameras near a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, with the company's Crew Dragon capsule attached, as she sits on the launch pad at Launch Complex 39A Friday, Nov. 13, 2020, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts will fly on the SpaceX Crew-1 mission to the International Space Station scheduled for launch on Nov. 14, 2020 (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)



A United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket carrying a classified spacecraft payload for the U.S. National Reconnaissance Office lifts off from Complex 41 at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Friday, Nov. 13, 2020, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



A United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket carrying a classified spacecraft payload for the U.S. National Reconnaissance Office lifts off from Complex 41 at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Friday, Nov. 13, 2020, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



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A United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket carrying a classified spacecraft payload for the U.S. National Reconnaissance Office lifts off from Complex 41 at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Friday, Nov. 13, 2020, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

NASA turned over space station ferry trips to SpaceX and Boeing, which has yet to launch anyone, following the retirement of the shuttle fleet in 2011. The space agency is looking to save big by no longer having to buy seats on Russian Soyuz capsules for U.S. astronauts. The last ticket, used by a NASA astronaut launched from Kazakhstan in October, cost \$90 million.

One launch pad over, meanwhile, an Atlas V rocket thundered into the sunset Friday with a classified spy satellite for the National

Reconnaissance Office. The launch from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station had been delayed repeatedly by pad and weather issues.

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