

NASA hits new snag with Artemis test at Kennedy Space Center, could threaten Axiom mission

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NASA looked to complete its Artemis moon rocket tanking test at Kennedy Space Center after an issue forced a scrub on Sunday, but a

new valve issue forced mission managers to call it off again.

NASA officials had already pulled the plug Sunday on the tanking [test](#) of the fully integrated Space Launch System rocket and Orion capsule at KSC's Launch Pad 39-B when it wasn't able to keep safely pressurized the mobile launcher on which the hardware sits.

That issue was mitigated overnight, but Monday's redo effort also fell short of its goal of filling and draining both the core and upper stages of the rocket with 730,000 gallons of super-cooled [liquid hydrogen](#) and liquid oxygen.

NASA teams were able to work around a series of issues Monday getting the [liquid oxygen](#) (LOX) loaded, but were ultimately stymied ahead of loading the liquid hydrogen by a vent valve, also located on the mobile launcher, that supplied pressure to the core stage of the rocket.

"Due the vent valve issue, the launch director has called off the test for the day," reads a post on NASA's Exploration Ground Systems Twitter. "The team is preparing to offload LOX and will begin discussing how quickly the vehicle can be turned around for the next attempt. A lot of great learning and progress today."

Already the weekend delay had created a [domino effect](#) that pushed the Axiom Space civilian launch to the International Space Station to no earlier than Friday.

That mission, though, which is shoehorned between NASA's Artemis tanking test and a planned crew rotation launch by SpaceX for NASA later this month, could face issues hitting its target launch opportunities.

"The idea is to go ahead and get this flight flown," said Axiom Space President and CEO Michael Suffredini. "Commercial Crew-4 for ISS is

right behind us. And so we're working closely with the ISS program to get our flight off before we have to stand down for Crew-4, and they'll work with us on that too."

It's currently targeting Friday at 11:17 a.m. but could be rescheduled if Artemis managers, who have priority at KSC, gear up for another tanking test.

"We'll work together—SpaceX, NASA and Axiom will work together to figure out where they would like to put the wet dress for SLS given our launch opportunities," Suffredini said.

Axiom's four passengers, three who paid \$55 million each plus a former NASA astronaut, remain in quarantine at KSC ahead of their planned 10-day mission called Ax-1.

The Ax-1 crew plans to be on board eight days, performing dozens of science experiments and enjoying the view, but will need to vacate in time for NASA's Crew-4 flight, which is slated for no earlier than March 20.

The uncrewed Artemis launch to the moon, meanwhile, won't come until NASA officials look at the data from the tanking test. The rocket will be rolled back to the Vehicle Assembly Building a little over a week after the tanking test completes, and then depending on any issues from the test, NASA will set a target launch window.

Previous announced possible launch windows have been June 6-16 and June 29-July 12.

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