

NASA moon rocket back in hangar, launch unlikely until November

September 27 2022, by MARCIA DUNN



The NASA moon rocket, right, slated for the Artemis mission to the moon rolls back to the Vehicle Assembly Building at the Kennedy Space Center Tuesday, Sept. 27, 2022, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. The launch of the rocket was postponed due to the impending arrival of Hurricane Ian. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux

NASA's moon rocket returned to the safety of its hangar Tuesday as Hurricane Ian approached Florida, its launch now unlikely before mid-November.

Instead of trying to send it on its first test flight, the launch team moved the 322-foot (98-meter) rocket off the pad at Kennedy Space Center. The four-mile (6.4-kilometer) trip took all night.

NASA official Jim Free said it would be difficult to upgrade the rocket and get it back to the pad for an October launch attempt. Putting in fresh batteries is particularly challenging, Free noted, making it doubtful a launch could be attempted before the mid-to-late October launch period closes. The next two-week window would open Nov. 12.

The Space Launch System rocket should have blasted off a month ago, but was delayed twice by fuel leaks and engine issues.

Once in space, the crew capsule atop the rocket will aim for lunar orbit with three test dummies, a crucial dress rehearsal before astronauts climb aboard in 2024. The last time a capsule flew to the moon was during NASA's Apollo 17 lunar landing in 1972.

SpaceX's next astronaut flight to the International Space Station for NASA, meanwhile, has been delayed at least one day by the hurricane. Liftoff is now no earlier than next Tuesday.



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