

Boeing's astronaut capsule faces more launch delays after latest problems

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Boeing's CST-100 Starliner spacecraft mounted on a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket is rolled out of the Vertical Integration Facility to the launch pad at Space Launch Complex 41 ahead of the Orbital Flight Test-2 (OFT-2) mission, Wednesday, May 18, 2022 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida. On Thursday, June 1, 2023, Boeing and NASA announced that the astronaut capsule faces more launch delays, this time because of flammable tape and weak parachute lines. Credit: Joel Kowsky/NASA via AP, File

Boeing's astronaut capsule faces more launch delays after the discovery of problems that should have been caught earlier, officials said.

Boeing and NASA announced the latest setback Thursday.

Until recently, the Starliner capsule was on track for a July test flight with two astronauts to the International Space Station, a planned trip that was already well behind schedule.

But final reviews uncovered issues with the parachute lines and other problems that were present on last year's test flight with no one on board and, officials said, should have been caught years ago.

As for whether Starliner might fly by year's end, Boeing program manager Mark Nappi said, "I think it's feasible, but I certainly don't want to commit to any dates or time frames" until the problems are fixed.

The capsule is full of wire harnesses wrapped in white tape that's flammable, according to Nappi. Rather than trying to remove the hundreds of feet of tape, which was supposed to protect against scuffing, the company may cover it with a safer material.

The parachute lines also were not designed to be strong enough to meet [safety standards](#).

"These tests were run many years ago. We reviewed those results. We missed those results, and this could have been caught sooner," Nappi said.

Following the retirement of the space shuttles more than a decade ago, NASA hired Boeing and SpaceX to transport astronauts to and from the [space station](#). SpaceX has now completed 10 crew flights, three of them private. Boeing had to repeat its 2019 [test flight](#) without a crew because

of software and other issues.

"NASA desperately needs a second provider for crew transportation," said Steve Stich, the space agency's commercial crew program manager.

The goal is to have one SpaceX and one Boeing taxi flight to the station each year.

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