

SpaceX targets sunset launch from KSC using booster for record-tying 19th time

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

SpaceX is set to send up another batch of Starlink satellites targeting one minute before sunset from the Space Coast on Wednesday night using a first-stage booster for a record-tying 19th time.

A Falcon 9 rocket carrying 23 of SpaceX's internet satellites is set to launch at the opening of a four-hour window that runs from 7:29-11:29

p.m. flying from Kennedy Space Center's Launch Pad 39-A. Backup opportunities are available during a four-hour window Thursday that opens at 7:04 p.m. With daylight saving time in play since last weekend, sunset hours have been pushed later. Sunset is set for 7:30 p.m.

Space Launch Delta 45's weather squadron forecasts a 60% chance for good conditions with upper level wind shear a concern. That improves to 95% in the event of a one-day delay.

The first-stage [booster](#) could equal the total number of flights by two of SpaceX's other boosters, one of which, though, was destroyed when it toppled over at sea.

This booster's resume includes two human spaceflights, the Inspiration4 orbital mission flown by billionaire Jared Issacman and the first private spaceflight for Axiom Space on its Ax-1 mission to the International Space Station. It has also flown the GPS III Space Vehicle 04, GPS III Space Vehicle 05, Nilesat 301, OneWeb Launch 17, ARABSAT BADR-8 and 11 Starlink missions.

SpaceX will attempt its recovery downrange in the Atlantic Ocean on its dronship A Shortfall of Gravitas.

The first booster to hit 19 fell over on its recovery dronship because of rough weather at sea in December. That lost booster had historic significance as it was used on the Demo-2 flight, which was SpaceX's first human spaceflight, back in 2020, and the only booster to feature a NASA logo, the iconic "worm" version. Newer boosters have upgraded landing legs with the capability to self-level, SpaceX has said.

A booster currently flying launches from California hit 19 on a launch on Feb. 23, so it has the potential to become the fleet leader.

SpaceX had its first successful booster recovery more than eight years ago and has since made 283 successful landings among Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy rockets. Among boosters for which it attempted recovery landings, it had not lost one since February 2021.

Falcon 9 launches remain the workhorse rocket for SpaceX, responsible in 2024 for 16 of 17 launches from the Space Coast including this launch.

Across its two Florida and one California launch pads, Falcon 9's will have flown 25 times during a year Elon Musk has said the company could have as many as 150.

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