

Boeing is closer to understanding thruster failures on its first astronaut flight with latest test

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This photo provided by NASA shows the Starliner spacecraft docked to the Harmony module of the International Space Station, orbiting 262 miles above Egypt's Mediterranean coast, on June 13, 2024. Credit: NASA via AP, File

Boeing is closer to understanding what went wrong with its [astronaut capsule](#) in orbit, now that testing is complete on a spare thruster here on Earth.

The [Starliner capsule](#) has been [docked](#) at the International Space Station since June 6. It should have returned with its [NASA test pilots](#) by mid-June, but [thruster](#) failures and helium leaks prompted NASA and Boeing to extend its stay.

Officials said Thursday there's still no return date for astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams. Engineers will first disassemble the thruster that was test-fired in New Mexico over the past couple of weeks. Then they'll analyze the data before clearing Starliner for the trip home.

"We collected an incredible amount of data on the thruster that could help us better understand what is going on in flight," NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich said in a statement.



In this photo provided by NASA, Boeing Crew Flight Test astronauts Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore, center, pose with Expedition 71 Flight Engineers Mike Barratt, left, and Tracy Dyson, aboard the International Space Station's Quest airlock on June 24, 2024. Officials said Thursday, July 18, there's still no return date for Williams and Wilmore, who have been at the International Space Station since June 6. Credit: NASA via AP, File

The testing managed to replicate the thruster conditions up until the capsule's docking at the [space station](#), as well as what the thrusters will experience between undocking and descent, according to NASA.

This is the Starliner's first test flight with a crew aboard.

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