

FAA lets SpaceX get back to launches, but Polaris Dawn awaits good weather

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SpaceX got the OK to fly again from the Federal Aviation Administration and didn't waste any time knocking out launches from both Florida and California early Saturday, but the crewed Polaris Dawn

launch remains on hold because of weather.

The FAA had grounded SpaceX's workhorse Falcon 9 after a launch from Cape Canaveral earlier this week ended with its first-stage booster toppling over in a fiery landing in the Atlantic.

"The SpaceX Falcon 9 vehicle may return to [flight operations](#) while the overall investigation of the anomaly during the Starlink Group 8-6 mission remains open, provided all other license requirements are met," the FAA said in a statement released Friday night. "SpaceX made the return to flight request on Aug. 29 and the FAA gave approval on Aug. 30."

With the OK to go, SpaceX first sent up a Falcon 9 from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station's Space Launch Complex 40 with 21 Starlink satellites launching at 3:43 a.m.

It marked the 61st launch among all providers from the Space Coast with SpaceX responsible for all but four.

Its first-stage booster made its 18th flight and stuck the landing without issue on the dronship Just Read the Instructions in the Atlantic Ocean.

Less than an hour later, SpaceX sent up another Falcon 9 with another 21 Starlink satellites from Vandenberg Space Force Base's Space Launch Complex 4E.

Its first-stage booster flew for the ninth time, landing on the dronship "Of Course I Still Love You" stationed in the Pacific Ocean.

It was the 24th West Coast launch for SpaceX, making it the company's 85th operational mission of the year, not including two test flights of Starship and Super Heavy from Texas.

SpaceX now also has the [green light](#) to send up what would be its next human spaceflight, the Polaris Dawn mission set to return billionaire Jared Isaacman to space along with three crewmates.

Isaacman first flew with SpaceX on the Inspiration4 mission in 2021, marking the first all-commercial crewed spaceflight.

He returns now in a partnership with SpaceX for the first of up to three spaceflights under the Polaris Program. The first mission's highlight will be the first commercial spacewalk when Isaacman and crewmate Sarah Gillis, a SpaceX employee, venture outside the spacecraft on a 12-foot-long tether.

Also flying on the mission are Scott Poteet, a former Air Force pilot and one of Isaacman's friends, and another SpaceX employee, Anna Menon. All four crew will be wearing new extravehicular activity (EVA) suits since the entire Crew Dragon will be vented of its atmosphere and subjected to the vacuum of space.

The quartet were set to launch early Tuesday this past week, but a helium leak on the [launch pad](#) forced SpaceX to scrub that attempt. Then as they geared up for a retry early Wednesday, SpaceX announced the [weather conditions](#) in the forecast for five days ahead of the potential landing sites on either coast of Florida were not good enough to launch. They took both the Wednesday and Thursday opportunities off the board.

That's when the launch and first-stage landing failure occurred from Cape Canaveral, forcing the FAA to call for an investigation grounding the rocket for a couple days.

In the meantime, SpaceX posted on Friday that weather was still an issue, so the chances for any weekend launch opportunities were already

unlikely.

"Latest forecasts continue to show unfavorable weather conditions in the areas along Florida's coast where Dragon would splash down upon returning from space," the company posted on X. "Once teams identify the next best opportunity for launch and return of the Polaris Dawn mission, we'll provide an update. Falcon 9 and Dragon remain healthy and vertical on the pad at 39A."

The Space Force has cleared the Falcon 9 to launch from KSC as early as Wednesday at 3:38 a.m., the first of three opportunities that span a launch window that runs until 7:15 a.m. Backup launch options fall to Thursday and Friday next week with the same launch window.

"The crew remains in quarantine, staying productive, keeping fit, and ready to launch within approximately 30 hours of receiving a favorable forecast," Isaacman posted to X this week.

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