

New Target Shuttle Launch Dates Announced as Astronauts Complete Rehearsal

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The STS-125 crew members line up outside the Astrovan after suiting up for the countdown dress rehearsal at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. From left are Mission Specialists Michael Good, Mike Massimino, Andrew Feustel, John Grunsfeld and Megan McArthur, Pilot Gregory C. Johnson and Commander Scott Altman. Image credit: NASA/Kim Shiflett

The target launch date for space shuttle Atlantis' STS-125 mission to service the Hubble Space Telescope has been reset to Oct. 14 at 10:19 p.m. EDT. A news conference is scheduled for Friday, Oct. 3, at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida to announce an official launch date.

With the delay of Atlantis' launch from Oct. 10 to Oct. 14, shuttle

Endeavour's STS-126 supply mission to the International Space Station, also will move from Nov. 12 to Nov. 16 at 7:07 p.m. EST. The target launch date adjustments were made Wednesday during the Space Shuttle Program's Flight Readiness Review, which concludes Thursday.

Detailed assessments were presented Wednesday by Mission Operations, Flight Crew Operations, and training divisions affected by the closure of the NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, as a result of Hurricane Ike. While vehicle processing at Kennedy continues on schedule, the lost week of training and mission preparation due to the impacts of the storm led to the decision to slip the dates.

The STS-125 astronauts capped off their three-day prelaunch training at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida by donning their orange launch-and-entry suits and heading to Launch Pad 39A for a full countdown dress rehearsal aboard space shuttle Atlantis.

This afternoon the crew members are set to return to their home base at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston where they will continue training for their mission to service NASA's Hubble Space Telescope.

During a question-and-answer session with members of the news media Tuesday morning, Mission Specialist John Grunsfeld addressed how difficult STS-125 will be. "The bottom line to me is this mission is really hard," Grunsfeld said. "After (STS) 109, I thought we'd really maxed out what we could do on a space mission. This time, we've added a lot of content with inspections. From an EVA standpoint, we've gone from doing heart surgery on Hubble to what is comparable to doing brain surgery on Hubble with the instrument repairs. So, this is going to be a very complex mission... it's going to be very hard."

Space shuttle Endeavour is at Launch Pad 39B where it will be on standby in the unlikely event that a rescue mission for the Atlantis's crew

would be necessary. After Endeavour is cleared from its duty as a rescue vehicle, workers will move it to pad 39A in preparation for liftoff on mission STS-126 to the International Space Station in November.

Source: NASA

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