NASA confirms next Friday for Webb Space Telescope launch
17 December 2021, by Marcia Dunn

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson confirmed Friday that the James Webb Space Telescope will attempt to blast off on Christmas Eve. A European Ariane rocket will provide the lift from South America's French Guiana.

Friday on the launch date, following one last round of testing.

Nelson expects a smaller crowd at the launch site because of the holidays. Liftoff is scheduled for 7:20 a.m. EST.

"Since it's Christmas Eve, all the congressional delegations that were going down, all of that has evaporated," he told The Associated Press. Even the NASA and contractor team has dwindled, he noted. But he'll be there.

Already years late in flying, Webb will look back to almost the beginning of time, to when the first stars and galaxies were forming, while also examining the atmospheres of planets orbiting stars closer to home. NASA is partnering with the European and Canadian space agencies on the mega project.

"There's so much riding on this," Nelson said, "opening up just all kinds of new understanding and revelations about the universe."

Is there a better Christmas present than seeing the telescope launch? Nelson answered by breaking into song: "All I want for Christmas are not my two front teeth, but for the success of JWST"—referring to the telescope by its acronym.

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