

Boeing Delta III, Delta IV Second Stage Test Firings Underway

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Boeing, Pratt & Whitney and NASA engineers are conducting initial test firings with the Boeing Delta III second stage at the NASA Lewis Research Center's Plum Brook Station in Sandusky, Ohio.

The team successfully fired the second stage March 6. The engine ignited on the first attempt and fired for 60 seconds as planned.

"The flawless firing of the new cryogenic second stage was a tremendously exciting milestone for the Delta program," said Mark Wilkins, Delta III second stage integrated product team lead. There are three more test firings scheduled prior to the maiden flight of the Delta III later this year.

The Delta III second stage engine, the RL10B-2, is built by Pratt & Whitney in West Palm Beach, Fla. The RL10B-2 is a liquid-hydrogen, liquid-oxygen cryogenic engine and is also slated for use with the Boeing Delta IV family of launch vehicles.

Boeing will use the majority of the second-stage system undergoing testing at Plum Brook as flight hardware including the hydrogen, oxygen and helium tanks. The firing tests will verify the design, processes, production and performance of the second stage as a complete system prior to flight.

The Plum Brook Station facilities conduct the testing in a low pressure, high altitude environment simulating the conditions the second stage will encounter during space flight.

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