Boeing Delta III Second-Stage Suspect in Launch Failure

Last night a Boeing Delta III rocket placed the Orion 3 satellite into a lower-than-expected orbit. Officials have made contact with the spacecraft, which was placed into an orbit 85 nautical miles by 744 nautical miles high.

The spacecraft should have been placed into an orbit 100 nautical miles by 13,886 nautical miles high. The satellite's current orbit closely matches the orbit the launch vehicle and spacecraft were in after the first of two planned second-stage engine burns.

At this time it is not known why the second stage did not complete a second planned 151-second burn, 21 minutes and 51 seconds into the rocket's flight. Up to that point in the mission, the Delta III rocket had been performing as expected.

Dr. Russ Reck, the director of engineering and technology for Boeing Expendable Launch Systems in Huntington Beach, Calif., will lead the investigation into last night's failure. He will lead the team for the length of the investigation. Dr. Reck brings a strong background in structural engineering, and served as the director of engineering for the Delta II program prior to his current assignment.

"We must and we will fly Delta III successfully," said Gale Schluter, vice president and general manager Boeing Expendable Launch Systems. "Russ and his team are going to move quickly to determine the cause of the failure and institute whatever corrective action may be needed. At the same time, if we can determine the cause of the failure is unique to Delta III, we will clear Delta II for flight."

At this time there are 11 Delta II and 2 Delta III flights remaining on the Boeing manifest for this year.

The rocket carried the Orion 3 telecommunications satellite into space for Hughes Space and Communications. The vehicle lifted off the pad at 9 p.m. EDT, and was scheduled to release the Hughes-built spacecraft into orbit 37-minutes later.Orion 3 was to be placed into orbit over the Asia-Pacific region where it would be owned and operated by Loral Space & Communications.

Information about this launch and the investigation will be released as it becomes available. For the latest information on the launch or the investigation please call the Boeing Launch Hotline at (714) 896-4770 or check the Delta web page at www.boeing.com/delta.

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Visit our Delta home page at: (www.boeing.com/delta).

For further information:
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