

World's Newest Rocket Ship Ready for Launch in Mississippi

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Tomorrow, a 312-foot rocket ship will be launched from the banks of the Pascagoula River.

The Motor Vessel (M/V) *Delta Mariner*, built by Halter Maritime in its shipyard here for Foss Marine of Seattle Wash., will ferry Boeing Delta IV rockets from Decatur, Ala., to launch sites in Florida and California.

"Over the past 12 months, we've watched many significant milestones in our Delta IV program," said Mike Kennedy, Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle/Delta IV vice president. "This is the perfect milestone with which to end the year, because the *Delta Mariner* ties all of those events together.

"From the production facility we brought online in Decatur, to the launch pads we're building at Cape Canaveral (Air Station, Fla.), and Vandenberg (Air Force Base, Calif.), and the accomplishments of our Alliant Techsystems and the Boeing Rocketdyne partners, we are continuing to progress toward a first launch in 2001."

Alliant Techsystems in Iuka, Miss., is building large composite structures used to assemble the Delta IV family of launch vehicles in Decatur. While in November, another division of Alliant Techsystems completed the first test firing of the solid rocket motors that will be used on the Delta IV M+ variants.

At the same time, the Boeing Rocketdyne Division activated and put into use two test stands at the John C. Stennis Space Center in Stennis, Miss., for the testing of the Delta IV main engine, the RS-68. Boeing is also assembling the main engines for the Delta IV launch vehicles in a new facility at Stennis.

The centerpiece of the Boeing Delta IV program is the 1.5-million square-foot production facility in Decatur, Ala. The facility was officially brought on line earlier this year with the assembly of the first Delta IV common booster core. Common booster cores are the building blocks of the Delta IV family of launch vehicles, and house the rocket's main engine, fuel tanks, and first-stage avionics. All five of the Delta IV variants use at least one CBC; the Delta IV Heavy uses three.

Designed to work on inland waterways and the open ocean, the *Delta Mariner* will transport space-bound hardware from Decatur, down the Tennessee Tombigbee waterway, through Mobile Bay, and into the Gulf of Mexico before rounding the Florida peninsula toward the Cape or transiting the Panama Canal en route to California.

Delta IV common booster cores, the size of commercial airplane fuselages, will be carried on and off the ship by specialized mobile transporters via the ramp in the stern of the vessel. The rocket's second-stages will be carried in specialized climate-controlled containers onboard the vessel. The vessel also will transport the payload adapters, which attach the spacecraft to the rocket, and the protective shells that surround the spacecraft, known as fairings.

NOTE TO EDITORS: The M/V *Delta Mariner* will be christened and launched in a ceremony at the Halter Marine Shipyard in Pascagoula, Miss. The event is scheduled to start at 10:30 a.m., Thursday, Dec. 16. For information on covering Thursday's event please contact Halter Marine at (504) 284-7330.

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Boeing Delta Web Site

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