New Boeing Rocket Engine Assembly Facility Opens At Stennis

The latest in rocket propulsion from The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] will roll off the assembly line in Hancock County, Miss., following today's opening of the SSC Engine Assembly Facility. Dignitaries from Boeing, the Army, NASA, and local, state and federal government dedicated a facility that eventually could produce as many as 40 RS-68 rocket engines each year.

The RS-68 engine is the latest large liquid-fueled engine developed by the Rocketdyne Propulsion & Power business of Boeing. The 650,000-lb. thrust engine will power the Delta IV family of expendable launch vehicles in the Boeing bid to meet the growing demands for commercial and government satellite launches.

In addition to officially opening the new assembly facility at the former Mississippi Army Ammunition Plant at SSC, today's event celebrated a long-term Boeing commitment to SSC that will preserve high-quality, high-tech space jobs in south Mississippi. Boeing invested $11 million in the facility (bringing the total Boeing investment in improvements and upgrades at the facility and SSC test stands to $27 million). Additional funds for the facility were provided by the state of Mississippi and the U.S. Army.

"We have had a long and beneficial relationship with SSC and we are looking forward to a significant expansion of our activities here," said Byron Wood, vice president and general manager of Boeing Rocketdyne. "It's appropriate that this community should play a major role in our continuing efforts to be the global leader in rocket propulsion during a new era in space. The synergy between Boeing and SSC will contribute to the low-cost, high-value of the Delta program."

Special guests joining Wood at the dedication included U.S. Senator Trent Lott (R-Miss.); Boeing President and Chief Operating Officer Harry Stonecipher; Boeing Space & Communications Group President Jim Albaugh; SSC Center Director Roy Estess; Tony Sconyers, director of the Law Center at US Army Industrial Operations Command; and Jay Moon, deputy director of the Mississippi Department of Economic and Community Development.

The SSC Engine Assembly Facility includes approximately 100,000 square feet of assembly, staging and office space to accommodate Boeing engine assembly programs. The facility gives Boeing the capability to assemble engine kits prior to the short two-mile trip to SSC test stands for development and certification testing. This ability to assemble and test RS-68 engines in close proximity at SSC will enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the Boeing commitment to deliver reliable, high-performance, low-cost launch services to their customers.

Boeing and Rocketdyne have a long-standing working relationship with SSC. The inaugural rocket engine tests at SSC were on engines produced by Rocketdyne for the Apollo program. Testing of the Space Shuttle Main Engines (SSME), produced by Boeing at Canoga Park, Calif., has been conducted at SSC since 1975 and will continue. In addition, testing is underway at SSC on the Rocketdyne XRS-2200 Linear Aerospike Engine for the NASA X-33 reusable launch vehicle.

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