Boeing Tells Customers "Delta III Ready for Flight"

Boeing told members of the satellite industry Tuesday that the Delta III rocket is ready to resume operations at the end of this month.

According to Dave Crosse, the Delta III return-to-flight lead, the final major test of his team's effort was completed recently at Pratt & Whitney's West Palm Beach facility in Florida.

"The final test looked at the stresses and temperatures the engine experiences at ignition under worst-case conditions," Crosse said. "The engine, with a new combustion chamber, passed with flying colors." Extensive testing and analysis ruled out vehicle-induced loads as the cause of the launch failure and validated the load prediction models.

In parallel with the testing program, Pratt & Whitney refined its process for building the RL10B-2 combustion chambers, as well as the methods used to verify the quality of each chamber. To date, Pratt & Whitney has produced 16 near perfect RL10 combustion chambers for both the Atlas and Delta programs.

Boeing and Pratt & Whitney engineers have already successfully completed acceptance testing on the return-to-flight second-stage engine. That engine also has been integrated into the Delta III second-stage system at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla., and is ready for flight.

"The customer meeting on Tuesday was the first of two major reviews to complete before our next launch," Crosse said. "In association with our Flight Readiness Review process we will perform a non-advocacy review led by our Huntington Beach Chief Engineer, Millie Kronfly."

Boeing Delta Web Site

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