International Space Station's First Truss Element Moves Closer to Launch

The Boeing Company International Space Station team officially handed over today the ceremonial key to the Boeing-built Z1 truss to the NASA shuttle integration team.

The Zenith 1 (Z1) is scheduled to fly in the space shuttle Discovery's cargo bay, along with the third of three Pressurized Mating Adapters (PMA3), on the STS 92 or ISS flight 3A mission now scheduled for Oct. 5. Z1 will carry components of the station's attitude, communications, thermal and power control systems including four control moment gyroscopes (CMG's), high and low gain antenna systems, and two plasma contactor units. It will be the first piece of the station's truss structure to be attached to the station by the astronauts. Astronauts will use the shuttle's robotic arm to attach Z1 and the PMA3 to the Unity module that is already orbiting in space with the Russian modules, Zarya and Zvezda.

"The Boeing team recognizes that this ceremonial exchange marks another important milestone in the International Space Station program as it works with NASA and other contractors to make this complex engineering marvel a reality," said John Elbon, Boeing launch site manager.

"The work has required a tremendous effort from Boeing and NASA teams from across the country to get the Z1 to where it is today, and we're all very proud of our accomplishments," said Mark Sorensen, Boeing Z1 cargo element manager.

Handing over the hardware to the shuttle integration team, however, does not conclude Boeing's work on the Z1. "There's a month-long set of activities including closeouts, element weight and center of gravity measurements and final reviews to ensure all systems are ready for launch and transportation in the payload canister. In late August we will transport the element to the pad and install it in the orbiter along with a new 3-D IMAX camera," said Mike Kinslow, Boeing payload manager for the 3A mission.

Z1 and PMA3 will be the first major U.S.-built cargo elements to be flown to the ISS since the successful launch of the Unity element in late 1998. The STS 92 mission is also the 100th flight of NASA's space shuttle program and it kicks off a series of ISS assembly flights that include the P6 module on the 4A mission in November and the Boeing-built scientific research laboratory, Destiny, on the 5A mission in January, 2001. In late October, the three-man Expedition I crew will be launched from Baikonur on board a Soyuz rocket to become the first humans to occupy the station for 120 days.

Boeing is NASA's prime contractor to design, develop, manufacture and assemble the ISS, which is the largest international space venture ever undertaken, and an historic joint effort of 16 countries. When fully assembled, it will house a crew of seven -- working in 46,000 cubic feet of pressurized volume spread across six laboratories, two habitation modules, and two logistics modules.

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