Qualification Testing on X-33 Flight Engines Begin

Qualification test firings of the unique engines designed by Boeing to propel America's X-33 space plane into high-speed, suborbital flight in 2003 began yesterday at NASA's John C. Stennis Space Center.

The ignition test went the full scheduled duration of 1.12 seconds with no observed anomalies.

Initial tandem test firings of the XRS-2200 Linear Aerospike engines developed by the Rocketdyne Propulsion & Power business of The Boeing Company will be short bursts such as this, eventually leading to durations required to send the unpiloted vehicle from a launch pad in California to landings in either Utah or Montana.

The engines will power the X-33, a half-scale, sub-orbital flight demonstrator of technology required for a reusable launch vehicle.

"Initial indications are all test objectives were met in this first test of the flight engines," said Mike McKeon, program manager for the XRS-2200 aerospike engine at Rocketdyne. "We are now reviewing the data and preparing to move into longer duration testing."

"I'm excited about beginning this phase of testing," said Dr. Don Chenevert, NASA's X-33 project manager at Stennis. "I'm confident the remainder of dual-engine testing to be performed as equally well as this initial ignition test."

Eight more test firings of the twin flight engines are planned at Stennis before they are delivered to Lockheed Martin's X-33 assembly facility in Palmdale, Calif.

Fourteen single-engine test firings of a development configuration of the unique Aerospike engine were successfully completed at Stennis Space Center in May 2000.

Boeing Rocketdyne developed the XRS-2200 Aerospike engine at its Canoga Park, Calif., facility. Final engine assembly was done by a joint Boeing and NASA team at Stennis Space Center.

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