Boeing Delta IV Team Takes Major Step Toward First Launch

Boeing [NYSE: BA] launch officials at Space Launch Complex 37, Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla., successfully completed the sixth tanking test of the first flight Delta IV rocket on Friday, moving it closer to its anticipated launch.

The test validated the systems involved with the new rocket, launch pad and mission control center, and allowed the launch team to conduct actual launch countdown procedures including the tanking of the rocket's liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen propellants.

Delta IV is the newest expendable launch vehicle from Boeing Launch Services which is part of Launch and Satellite Systems, a principal business unit of Boeing Integrated Defense Systems.

"Today's tanking test verified the launch countdown sequence of events," said Joy Bryant, Boeing Delta IV launch site director. "In addition to tanking the vehicle, our team successfully executed the software program that automates the final minutes of the count. We're now preparing for our final wet dress rehearsal when we'll ignite the RS-68 main engine for approximately five seconds."

An initial review of the test data revealed that all elements tested performed flawlessly, including the rocket's software and communication systems; telemetry system; range interface between launch controllers and the rocket; tanking timelines, and the strap-on booster systems.

"The team did an excellent job of integrating the systems for Delta IV, and I am very pleased with today's results. This is a major milestone for the program. We have taken the well established Delta II launch process and added automation to increase our reliability. Having thoroughly proven the system under actual launch conditions, we can now move forward with high confidence toward our flight readiness firing test," said Mark Wilkins, Delta IV chief engineer.

"The team and the hardware all worked very well today. We set up a rigorous test program focused on assuring mission success and it has provided all the data we need to move forward," said Dan Collins, Boeing vice president of Delta programs. "By building on each success, we allow our team the opportunity to understand the entire system one piece at a time. We've now put all the pieces together and we're excited as we move to the flight readiness firing."

Upon successful completion of the second and final wet dress rehearsal, the Delta team will move forward with payload integration and final vehicle preparation for launch of the Eutelsat W5 telecommunications satellite, scheduled for Nov. 3.

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