

Sea Launch Ready to Fly

Sea Launch President James G. Maser has informed customers and insurers that Sea Launch is ready to resume flight, following the completion of the Sea Launch Failure Review Oversight Board (FROB) investigation into the failure of the ILS Proton Astra-1K mission.

Maser had grounded the Sea Launch fleet following the ILS Proton mission failure on November 26, 2002, when the Block DM upper stage failed to complete the second of three planned burns. Similarities between the ILS Proton Block DM and the Sea Launch Block DM-SL upper stages required that Sea Launch determine if there were any issues that would have an impact on the Block DM-SL.

A CIS State Commission recommended seven corrective actions to preclude similar failures in the future. The Sea Launch FROB concluded a thorough review of facts and data of the CIS State Commission and agreed with its findings into the root cause and resulting corrective action. Kirk Pysher, Vice President and Chief Systems Engineer, who chaired the Sea Launch FROB, stated that "the telemetry and ground test data clearly substantiates the failure mode and the identified corrective actions will preclude a similar failure in the future."

The members of the Sea Launch FROB found that six of the seven corrective actions either do not apply to the Sea Launch configuration of the Block DM or are already in place within the existing Sea Launch hardware, processes and quality assurance procedures. "This reinforces our confidence in our existing systems integration and decision-making processes that have led to Sea Launch's excellent record with the Zenit-3SL," said Pysher.

Moving forward, Sea Launch will address the one corrective action that is applicable to the Block DM-SL. This corrective action provides for additional system level testing and inspection during pre-launch processing of the Block DM-SL. "Continuous improvement of testing and inspection is part of our ongoing process of utilizing our collective experience to achieve our goal of 100% mission success," said Maser.

"Our customers are satisfied with the results of our review and we are all confident in this flight proven system," Maser said. "We now await delivery of our customer's spacecraft, the EchoStar IX satellite, to begin processing for our next mission."

Sea Launch Company, LLC, based in Long Beach, Calif., and sold commercially through Boeing Launch Services, provides reliable, cost-effective, heavy lift launch services for commercial satellite customers. The Sea Launch partners include Boeing, RSC Energia, SDO Yuzhnoye/PO Yuzhmash and the Kvaerner Group. Established in 1995, Sea Launch has a current backlog of 17 firm launch contracts. As the world's only services provider launching from the Equator, Sea Launch offers the optimal starting point for spacecraft heading to Geostationary Orbit. For additional information, please visit the Sea Launch website.

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For further information:

Paula Korn

562 254-5684

paula.korn@boeing.com
