



# countdown

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## New external tank for STS-118 moves to VAB this week

◆ **Shuttle Update:** On *Atlantis*, preparations are under way for the removal of the three main engines to inspect for flow liner contamination. This work can be accomplished within the time frame of the hail damage recovery effort, with no impact to the launch schedule for STS-117.

All three orbiter main engines were removed from *Endeavour* last week to allow for flow liner contaminant inspections. The orbiter boom sensor system was removed for mechanical repairs on the boom pedestals. The boom is scheduled to be reinstalled this week. The forward external airlock hatch functional test was successfully completed, and closeout of the payload bay compartments is under way.

Also, ET-117, the external fuel tank to be used for STS-118, arrived at KSC April 6 and will be moved next week to the Vehicle Assembly Building, where it will be placed in a checkout cell in high bay No. 2 for processing.

Processing of *Discovery*, which returned from the STS-116 mission on Dec. 22, continues in Orbiter Processing Facility bay 3. Mechanical and electrical mates and leak checks of fuel cell No. 2 are done. Coolant servicing for fuel cell No. 2 is complete. Water spray boiler system servicing and checkout continues. Wire tray closeouts in the midbody are ongoing and cargo bay closeouts are under way.

KSC National Day Of Prayer — KSC will mark this year's National Day of Prayer with an hour-long observance at 11 a.m. in the KSC Training Auditorium on May 3. For more information, contact Ed Markowski at 867-0829.

## NASA administrator holds all-hands meeting Wednesday

◆ **All Hands:** NASA Administrator Mike Griffin will hold an all-hands meeting with KSC employees at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday at the Training Auditorium. Seating is limited and allocations have been distributed to NASA and contractor offices. The meeting will be broadcast live on NASA TV, Channel 7, and will also be available on the internal home page at:

<http://portal.ksc.nasa.gov/portal/>.

■ **Pathfinder Test Flights at KSC** — Today a privately operated F-104 jet aircraft will take off from the KSC Shuttle Landing Facility on the first in a series of pathfinder test missions from the space shuttle runway. Two flights will generate test data to validate sonic boom assumptions about the potential impacts of sub-orbital and orbital commercial spaceflight from the facility. NASA is assessing the environmental impact of such flights.

Starfighters Inc. of Clearwater, Fla., will perform the flights to help in assessing suborbital space launch trajectories from the runway and paving the way for future commercial space tourism and research flights from the facility.

A Starfighter F-104 will take off from the runway on a northerly trajectory, following the flight path anticipated for suborbital vehicles which may horizontally launch from the facility. The aircraft will bank east over the Atlantic, where it will climb to an altitude and distance representative of where vehicles accelerating on a suborbital parabolic trajectory will break the sound barrier.

Ground stations will record any discernible sonic boom noise at several locations along the coast. This will assess the

noise impact of such flights, both during launches and return flights to a landing at the spaceport.

Future test flights are planned to investigate communications and telemetry systems, and to support the validation of operating procedures that may be used in conducting future suborbital missions and related training flights.

■ **Cingular Wireless KSC Employee Day, April 18** — Cingular Wireless representatives will be in the Headquarters Lobby from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesday. All equipment and accessories will be 25 percent off. To qualify for the Cingular Premier online discounts, please go to [cingular.com](http://cingular.com). Discounts printed from the Premier web site will be honored during the Cingular Wireless Employee Day. If you have any questions, please call Cingular at 321-452-0400.

■ **NASA Science** — What happens to a hurricane when it gets hit by a dust storm? This is an important question because Atlantic hurricanes are born not far from the Sahara desert. Recently, NASA scientists gathered data that brings them closer to the answer -- by flying directly into a dusty hurricane. Read about it at: [http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2007/13apr\\_dustyhurricanes.htm?list29875](http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2007/13apr_dustyhurricanes.htm?list29875).

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