National Aeronautics and Space Administration

SPACE LAUNCH SYSTEM

AUGUST – OCTOBER 2026 HIGHLIGHTS



MISSION MOMENTUM: ARTEMIS III TAKES SHAPE

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NASA JOINS ARTEMIS III ORION MODULES; ROCKET HARDWARE UPDATE

NASA is advancing toward Artemis III's crewed demonstration mission with accelerated, measurable progress across all fronts.

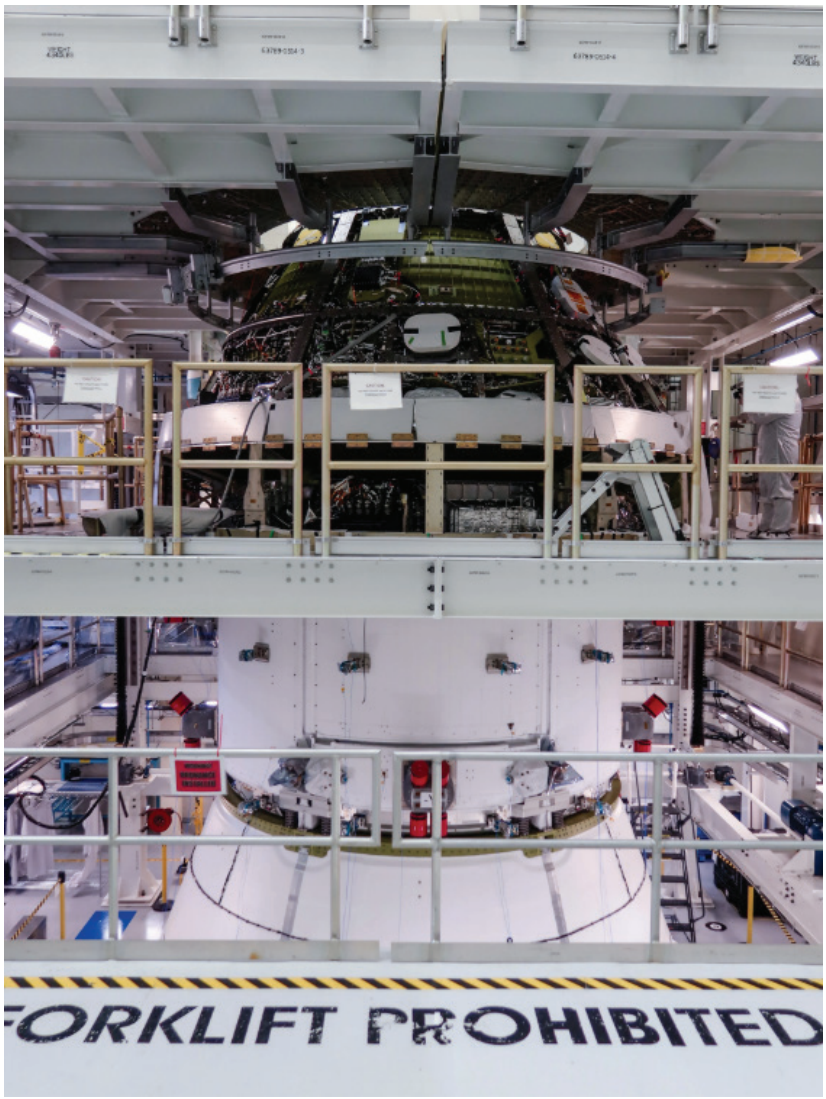
On July 30, the Orion crew and service modules were joined inside the Neil Armstrong Operations and Checkout Building at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

After successfully completing hardware installations and testing, engineers connected the two major components of Orion that will fly the Artemis III crew. The crew module will carry and sustain the astronauts, while the service module will power and propel Orion during the mission to test rendezvous and docking capabilities with test versions of commercial human landing systems from Blue Origin and SpaceX.

With the crew and service modules integrated, teams will soon power up the combined spacecraft for the first time, followed by integrated testing and final hardware installations.

Preparations on the SLS (Space Launch System) rocket also continue to advance at NASA Kennedy. Following inspections and checkouts, teams began stacking the twin solid rocket boosters inside the Vehicle Assembly Building in early July, while all four RS-25 engines arrived later in the month for core stage integration.

Read more: **go.nasa.gov/3W4IGzL**



The Orion crew and service modules for Artemis III were joined July 30, 2026, inside the Neil A. Armstrong Operations and Checkout Building at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida

NASA STARTS ARTEMIS III ENGINE INSTALL; BOOSTERS, CREW TRAINING ADVANCE

On August 24, technicians at NASA Kennedy began the installation of the four RS-25 engines in the core stage of the agency's SLS rocket for Artemis III.

The milestone marks the next phase of core stage integration following the mating of the engine section to the top four-fifths of the stage earlier this summer. Inside High Bay 2 at the spaceport's Vehicle Assembly Building, teams will continue installing the remaining engines, as well as the propulsion and electrical systems throughout the stage.

Stacking of the twin solid rocket boosters atop the mobile launcher inside the Vehicle Assembly Building is more than halfway complete, with operations underway since early July.

Progress on the Orion spacecraft continues after the recent integration of the crew and service modules. Technicians recently installed the umbilical connector, which bridges the electrical, data, and fluid systems between the two modules, and installed its electrical connectors and fluid lines. After joining the two components, teams powered on the spacecraft to verify electrical connectivity through the umbilical mechanism and ensure that the crew and service module communicate as planned.

After being assigned to the Artemis III mission June 9, NASA astronauts Randy Bresnik, Andre Douglas, Frank Rubio, and ESA (European Space Agency) astronaut Luca Parmitano began an intensive training flow that covers Orion systems and operations, science objectives, leadership and team building exercises, as well as joint training with commercial human landing system providers.

The crew's training is organized around major phases of the mission, including ascent, orbit and rendezvous operations, entry, and both pre- and post-landing readiness.

Read more: **go.nasa.gov/4e5tqJ2**



Inside the Vehicle Assembly Building at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, technicians prepare to transfer the No. 2 RS-25 engine (front) to a work stand alongside the No. 3 engine (back) for core stage integration.

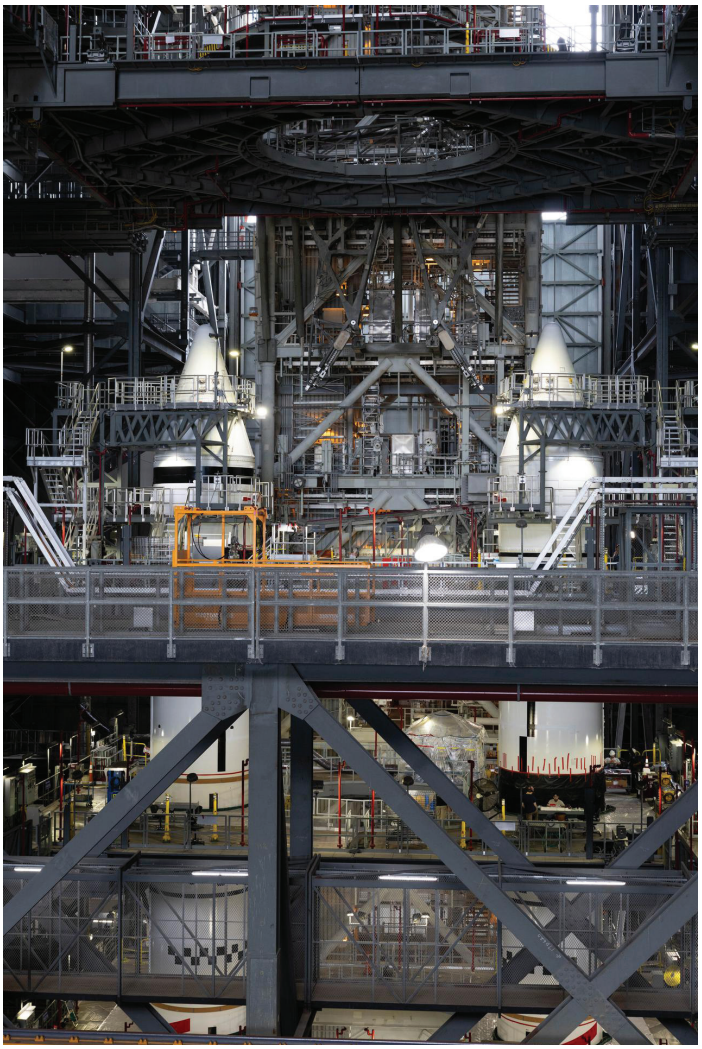
NASA COMPLETES ARTEMIS III BOOSTER STACKING, SHARES STATUS UPDATE

Progress on NASA's Artemis III's SLS rocket continues at NASA Kennedy, where teams completed stacking the twin solid rocket boosters on the mobile launcher, and completed installation of all four RS-25 engines on the rocket's core stage.

Next, teams will install the systems tunnel along the length of the 212-ft. core stage. The tunnel houses pyrotechnic cabling used to activate the single-use quick-disconnect system during liftoff. In the coming weeks, the stage will be integrated with the solid rocket boosters, completing the rocket's "short stack" configuration.

NASA will roll the short stack SLS rocket from the spaceport's Vehicle Assembly Building to Launch Pad 39B for a tanking test in the coming months, where the Artemis launch team will practice procedures and timelines for loading propellant. While at the pad, the Artemis III crew, NASA astronauts Randy Bresnick, Frank Rubio, Andre Douglas, and ESA astronaut Luca Parmitano, also will conduct a launch day rehearsal and emergency exit walkdown. This will include suiting up in astronaut crew quarters, driving to the launch pad, ascending the mobile launcher, and then walking through the exit route they would take in the unlikely event of an emergency during launch countdown.

Read more: **go.nasa.gov/4zUiCFT**



Exploration Ground Systems finished stacking operations for Artemis III inside the Vehicle Assembly Building's High Bay 3 at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2026.

BEHOLD THE BEAUTY

All four RS-25 engines for the Artemis III mission have been fully integrated into the rocket's core stage following their soft mate in late August.

A recent time-lapse video offers an up-close look at the engines responsible for launching the Artemis III crew into low Earth orbit next year.

Read more: **go.nasa.gov/3Uhinpr**



GIMME SPACE

Technician's at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, recently welded the forward ring on the bottom of the Artemis III spacer's barrel section.

This spacer will take the place of the interim cryogenic propulsion stage (ICPS) on Artemis III, with the ICPS reassigned for use on the Artemis IV mission.

A recent time-lapse video shows various views of the barrel section as a team of technicians lift it onto a work stand.

Watch here: **go.nasa.gov/4eDrWWx**



Continued from previous page

NERDY WORDS IS BACK!

Before astronauts return to the Moon, we must put everything to the test!

From ground systems to the SLS rocket and NASA's Orion spacecraft, every piece has to work together before astronauts can safely head back to the lunar surface.

Learn about all this and more in the latest episode of Nerdy Words Season 2.

Read more: **go.nasa.gov/6LVChwc**



JOIN THE STORY

Hooray for SLS! The rocket sent the Artemis II crew on an exciting, historic mission. Our Friend Orion kept them safe and comfy while they explored farther than ever before. And thanks to our important partners, they were able to go There and Back with EGS!

See NASA's three-part children's book series come to life in an animated short celebrating the rocket, spacecraft, and teams that make the Artemis missions possible.

Watch here: **go.nasa.gov/3BWSeja**



SLS ON THE ROAD

TO RED ROCKS AND BEYOND

In August, the Artemis II crew visited Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado to share insights and footage from their historic lunar flyby with members of the public, including many of the suppliers who contributed to the SLS rocket. The event drew nearly 10,000 attendees and offered a rare opportunity for the public to connect with the crew. The SLS team supported the event and engaged with thousands of attendees, contributing to one of the year's most memorable outreach experiences.



ROCKET AGE IN A DIGITAL WORLD

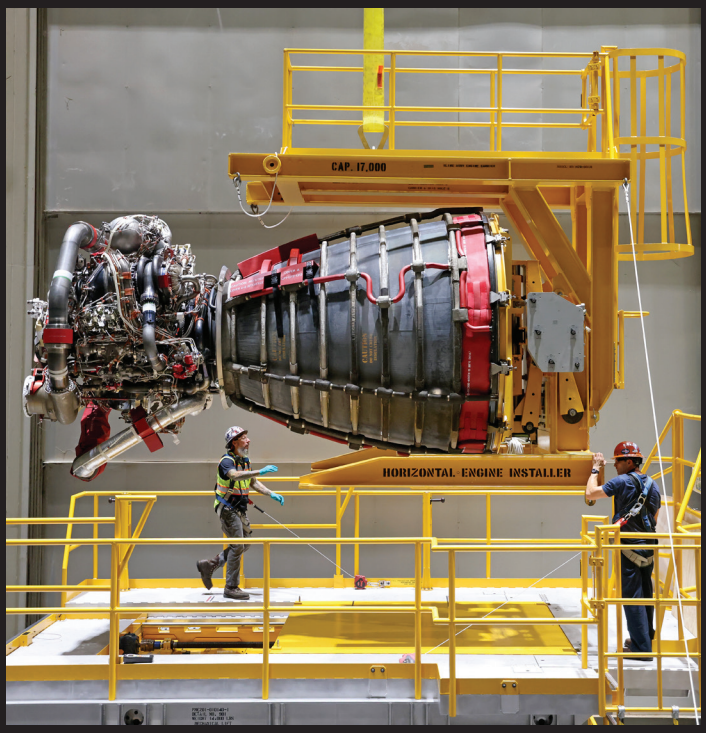
In September, the SLS Strategic Communications team returned to PAX West in Seattle, Washington, for a second year, engaging with the worlds of pop culture and gaming. This year, the team brought together representatives from NASA's Orion spacecraft, the Exploration Ground Systems Closeout Crew, and NASA's MoonBase for a live panel exploring how core principles of gaming connect to the complex, dynamic world of space exploration.



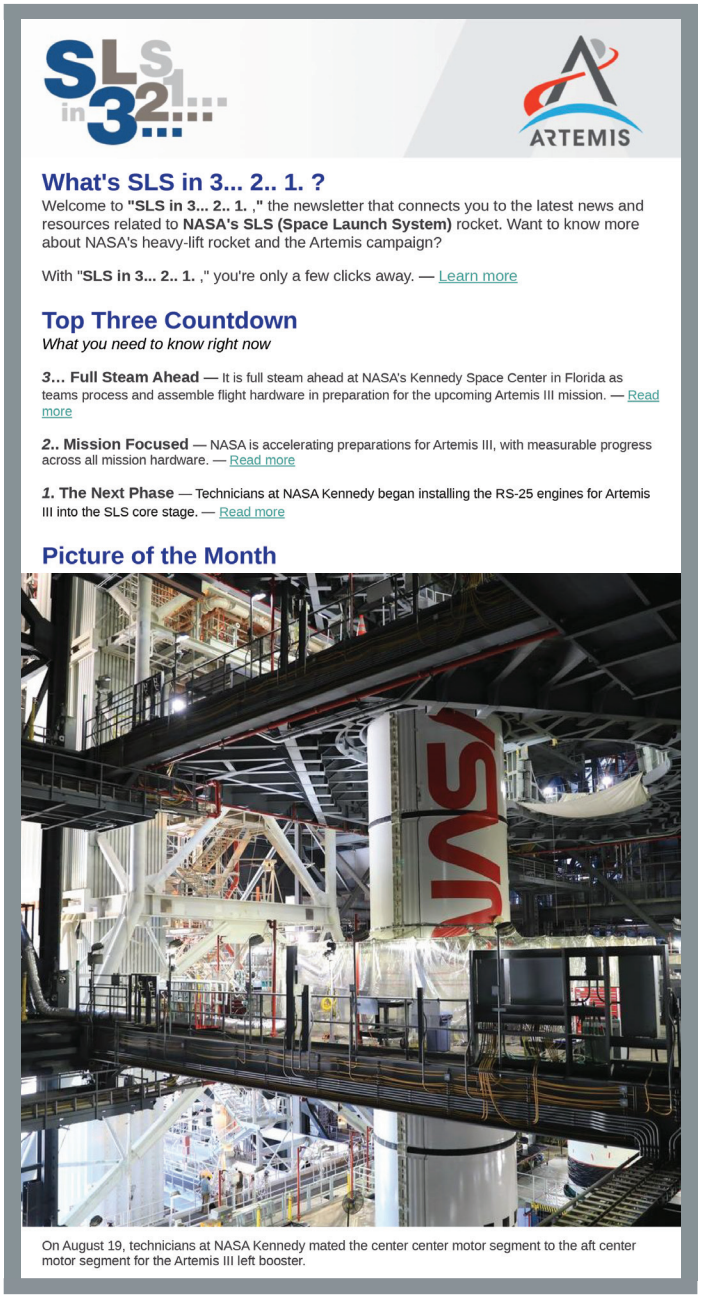
SPACEFLIGHT PARTNERS:
L3Harris Technologies

LOCATION: Melbourne, Florida

WHAT THEY DO FOR SLS:
L3Harris Technologies supports the Artemis program by producing the four RS-25 engines that power each SLS rocket and provides critical avionics components for the launch vehicle.



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SLS in 3...2...1...

ARTEMIS

What's SLS in 3... 2.. 1. ?

Welcome to **"SLS in 3... 2.. 1. ,"** the newsletter that connects you to the latest news and resources related to **NASA's SLS (Space Launch System)** rocket. Want to know more about NASA's heavy-lift rocket and the Artemis campaign?

With "**SLS in 3... 2.. 1.** ," you're only a few clicks away. — Learn more

Top Three Countdown

What you need to know right now

***3...* Full Steam Ahead** — It is full steam ahead at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida as teams process and assemble flight hardware in preparation for the upcoming Artemis III mission. — Read more

***2..* Mission Focused** — NASA is accelerating preparations for Artemis III, with measurable progress across all mission hardware. — Read more

***1.* The Next Phase** — Technicians at NASA Kennedy began installing the RS-25 engines for Artemis III into the SLS core stage. — Read more

Picture of the Month

On August 19, technicians at NASA Kennedy mated the center center motor segment to the aft center motor segment for the Artemis III left booster.

FOLLOW THE PROGRESS OF NASA'S NEW LAUNCH VEHICLE FOR DEEP SPACE:

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