

Shuttle Atlantis moves to pad, crew ready for countdown test

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

The space shuttle Atlantis arrived at its launch pad at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Fla., Thursday on top of the giant vehicle known as the crawler transporter. The next milestone for the upcoming mission, STS-117, is a full launch dress rehearsal as the six-member crew prepares to continue building the International Space Station.

The crawler transporter began carrying Atlantis out of Kennedy's Vehicle Assembly Building at 8:19 a.m. It traveled just under 1 mph during the 3.4 mile journey.

While at the pad, the shuttle will undergo final testing, payload installation and a "hot fire" test of auxiliary power units. When testing is completed, the rotating service structure will be moved around the vehicle for protection.

Atlantis' targeted launch date is March 15. During the 11-day mission, the crew will install a new truss segment, retract a set of solar arrays and unfold a new set on the starboard side of the station. The launch marks the first liftoff from Pad 39A in four years.

The astronauts and ground crews for the mission will participate in a launch dress rehearsal, known as the terminal countdown demonstration test, Feb. 21 to 23 at Kennedy. The test provides the crew of each shuttle mission with an opportunity to participate in various simulated countdown activities, including equipment familiarization and emergency egress training.

Permanently badged media interested in attending the demonstration test events should contact the Kennedy News Center at 321-867-2468 by 4 p.m. Feb. 20. If media have been approved to cover the STS-117 mission, there is no need to reapply for credentials for the demonstration test events. STS-117 mission badges will be available for pick up beginning Feb. 21 from 8 a.m. to noon at the NASA Pass and Identification Building on State Road 3.

Accreditation for foreign news media for this event is closed. U.S. media without Kennedy credentials may apply for accreditation online through 4 p.m. Feb. 20 at:

<https://media.ksc.nasa.gov/>

The crew includes Commander Rick Sturckow, Pilot Lee Archambault and mission specialists Jim Reilly,

Patrick Forrester, Steven Swanson and John "Danny" Olivas.

Media Events (All Times Eastern)

Feb. 21 -- STS-117 Crew Arrival: The crew will arrive at 1 p.m. at the Shuttle Landing Facility and make a statement. Media should arrive at Kennedy's News Center by noon for transportation to the facility. The arrival will be carried live NASA TV coverage.

Feb. 22 -- STS-117 Crew Media Q&A: The crew of Atlantis will take media questions at Launch Pad 39A at 7:40 a.m. Media must arrive at the News Center by 6:30 a.m. for transportation to the launch pad. The session will be carried live on NASA TV.

Feb. 23 -- STS-117 Crew Walkout Photo Opportunity: The astronauts will depart from the Operations and Checkout Building at 7:45 a.m. in their flight entry suits in preparation for the countdown demonstration test at the launch pad. Media need to arrive at the News Center by 6:45 a.m. to cover the event. There will be no live NASA TV coverage.

Since dates and times of events are subject to change, updates are available at 321-867-2525. The events will take place in operational areas, so all participants must be properly dressed in full-length pants, flat shoes that entirely cover the feet and shirts with sleeves. Tank tops are not allowed.

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