# Boeing's CST-100 Starliner Crewed Flight Delayed Again Due to Helium Leak



Boeing's CST-100 Starliner spacecraft, intended for its first crewed flight, has faced another delay due to a helium leak. Initially scheduled for a test launch last week, technical issues postponed it to this Friday, and now it is rescheduled for next Tuesday at the earliest. The aerospace company cited a malfunction with a pressure-regulating valve in the rocket's second-stage liquid oxygen tank as the initial cause of the delay.

Engineers from United Launch Alliance, a joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Boeing, replaced and tested the faulty valve. While the new valve performed normally, the helium leak still needs resolution. Boeing has yet to resolve the helium leak issue but plans to pressurize the system fully and vent the helium naturally.

The Starliner program has experienced multiple setbacks. In 2019, its first uncrewed test flight failed to reach the International Space Station due to a software issue. A 2021 attempt was halted by corroded valves. An uncrewed test mission in 2022 succeeded in reaching the space station but revealed problems with the parachute system and flammable tape that needed rectification.

NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Barry "Butch" Wilmore are currently in quarantine, awaiting the mission. If the flight proceeds on schedule, liftoff is set for 4:43 p.m. from Cape Canaveral, Florida. Successful completion of the mission would allow NASA to certify Starliner for regular crew rotations to the space station.

In contrast, SpaceX, the other NASA-contracted company, has been successfully launching crewed missions to and from the space station since 2020.