

## **Investigation into failed New Glenn landing**

*Blue Origin says its next New Glenn launch will be as soon as late spring after completing an investigation into the failed booster landing on the vehicle's fir...*

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## Launch

### **Article I. Investigation into failed New Glenn landing completed**

by **Jeff Foust** March 31, 2025

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Blue Origin's New Glenn lifts off on its first flight Jan. 16. Credit: Blue Origin

WASHINGTON — Blue Origin says its next New Glenn launch will be as soon as late spring after completing an investigation into the failed booster landing on the vehicle's first flight.

The Federal Aviation Administration announced March 31 it accepted the findings of an investigation led by Blue Origin into [the inaugural flight of New Glenn on Jan. 16](#). While the vehicle's upper stage reached orbit as planned, the first stage was unable to land on a Blue Origin landing ship in the Atlantic Ocean.

"The final mishap report identified the proximate cause of the mishap as an inability of New Glenn's first stage to restart the engines, preventing a reentry burn from occurring, and resulting in the loss of the stage," the FAA said in its statement. It noted that Blue Origin identified seven corrective actions, but did not enumerate them.

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Completing the investigation allows Blue Origin to proceed with the rocket's next flight, pending FAA verification that the company implemented those corrective actions. "The Blue Origin New Glenn vehicle is authorized to return to flight provided all other licensing requirements are met," the FAA stated.

"Our ambitious attempt to land the booster, 'So You're Telling Me There's a Chance,' was unsuccessful due to our three BE-4 engines not re-igniting properly," the company said in a social media [post](#) published the same time as the FAA statement. "The report identified seven corrective actions, focusing on propellant management and engine bleed control improvements, which we're already addressing."

The company said its next flight was planned for late spring, which will include another booster landing attempt. The company did not provide a more specific schedule or identify any payload for the next New Glenn launch. A spokesperson for Blue Origin told SpaceNews that the company was not providing additional details beyond its social media post.

Dave Limp, chief executive of Blue Origin, said at the Commercial Space Conference Feb. 12 that [the company was targeting late spring for the next New Glenn launch](#). He suggested in comments at the conference that problems getting propellant to the engines caused the loss of the booster, but declined to go into details citing the ongoing investigation.

"We're confident that the propellant and bleed control work we're doing will increase our chances of landing the booster on our next flight," Limp said in a social media [post](#) March 31. "And like we've said all along, we'll keep trying until we do."

The FAA also announced March 31 that it accepted the findings of a separate investigation into the loss of SpaceX's Starship vehicle on [its seventh test flight](#), which took place the same day as the first New Glenn launch.

"The final mishap report cites the probable root cause for the loss of the Starship vehicle was stronger than anticipated vibrations during flight led to increased stress on, and failure of, the hardware in the propulsion system," the FAA stated, which matched [what SpaceX said about the loss of the Starship upper stage](#).

The FAA [allowed SpaceX to proceed with the next Starship test flight even through that mishap investigation was still underway](#) after completing what it called “the required and comprehensive safety review.” However, the Starship upper stage once again was lost at about the same phase of flight [on that eighth test flight March 6](#).

The FAA stated that the investigation into the latest Starship test is still in progress, with no details from the agency or SpaceX about the potential root cause. “SpaceX may not launch Starship again until the FAA accepts the final mishap investigation report or makes a return to flight determination and all other licensing requirements are met,” the FAA stated.

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**Article III.     FAA closes New Shepard mishap investigation**



**Blue Origin to resume New Shepard suborbital launches**

**Blue Origin to resume New Shepard suborbital launches**

by [Jeff Foust](#) December 12, 2023

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Blue Origin's New Shepard lifts off March 31, 2022, on the NS-20 suborbital missions. Credit: Blue Origin webcast

WASHINGTON — Blue Origin has announced plans to launch its New Shepard suborbital vehicle on its first flight since a mishap more than 15 months ago.

Blue Origin [announced](#) on social media Dec. 12 that it will launch its New Shepard vehicle no earlier than Dec. 18 from its West Texas test site. The vehicle will carry 33 experiments as well as 38,000 postcards from Club for the Future, the educational nonprofit affiliated with the company. The flight will be uncrewed.

The mission, designated NS-24, would be the first for New Shepard since [a mishap on a September 2022 flight](#), NS-23, that also was uncrewed. A problem with the vehicle's main engine triggered the crew capsule's abort motor about a minute after liftoff. The capsule landed safely while the propulsion module crashed.

Blue Origin said in March that [it concluded its investigation into the mishap](#), finding that the BE-3PM engine in the propulsion module suffered a structural failure of its nozzle. That failure was linked to thermal damage caused by operating temperatures higher than designed.

However, it took six months for [the Federal Aviation Administration's Office of Commercial Space Transportation to close the mishap investigation](#), identifying 21 corrective actions for the company to undertake before flying again. Those actions ranged from technical modifications to the engine to unspecified "organizational changes."

When the FAA closed the investigation Sept. 26, Blue Origin said it would resume flights "soon" but did not offer a more specific timeframe. In June, Bob Smith, chief executive of Blue Origin at the time, [said the company was ready to resume flights "within the next few weeks."](#) Smith announced Sept. 25 [he would step down as CEO in December](#), and the company is now led by a former Amazon executive, Dave Limp.

The company has not elaborated on the long delay in returning New Shepard to flight. That delay led to speculation that the company was deemphasizing, or might phase out, New Shepard to free up resources for other company priorities. Since the vehicle's last flight in September 2022 the company won a NASA contract to develop a version of its Blue Moon lunar lander for NASA's Human Landing System program, unveiled an orbital transfer vehicle called Blue Ring, and continued work on its New Glenn orbital launch vehicle and Orbital Reef commercial space station projects.

During the hiatus in New Shepard launches, Virgin Galactic started commercial service with its SpaceShipTwo suborbital vehicle, VSS Unity, performing six flights, five of which were commercial, in less than six months. However, [Virgin Galactic announced Nov. 8 that it would shift from monthly to quarterly flights of Unity in the first half of 2024 and then stop then entirely](#) to ensure it had sufficient resources to complete development of its new Delta-class suborbital vehicles.

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**Blue Origin blames New Shepard mishap on engine nozzle failure**



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**New Shepard**



**Article VII. Blue Origin launches tenth New Shepard suborbital human spaceflight**

by **Jeff Foust** February 25, 2025

Blue Origin conducted the tenth crewed flight of its New Shepard suborbital vehicle Feb. 25, carrying six people, one of whom was at least semi-anonymous.



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by **Jeff Foust** January 24, 2025



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by Jeff Foust March 1, 2025



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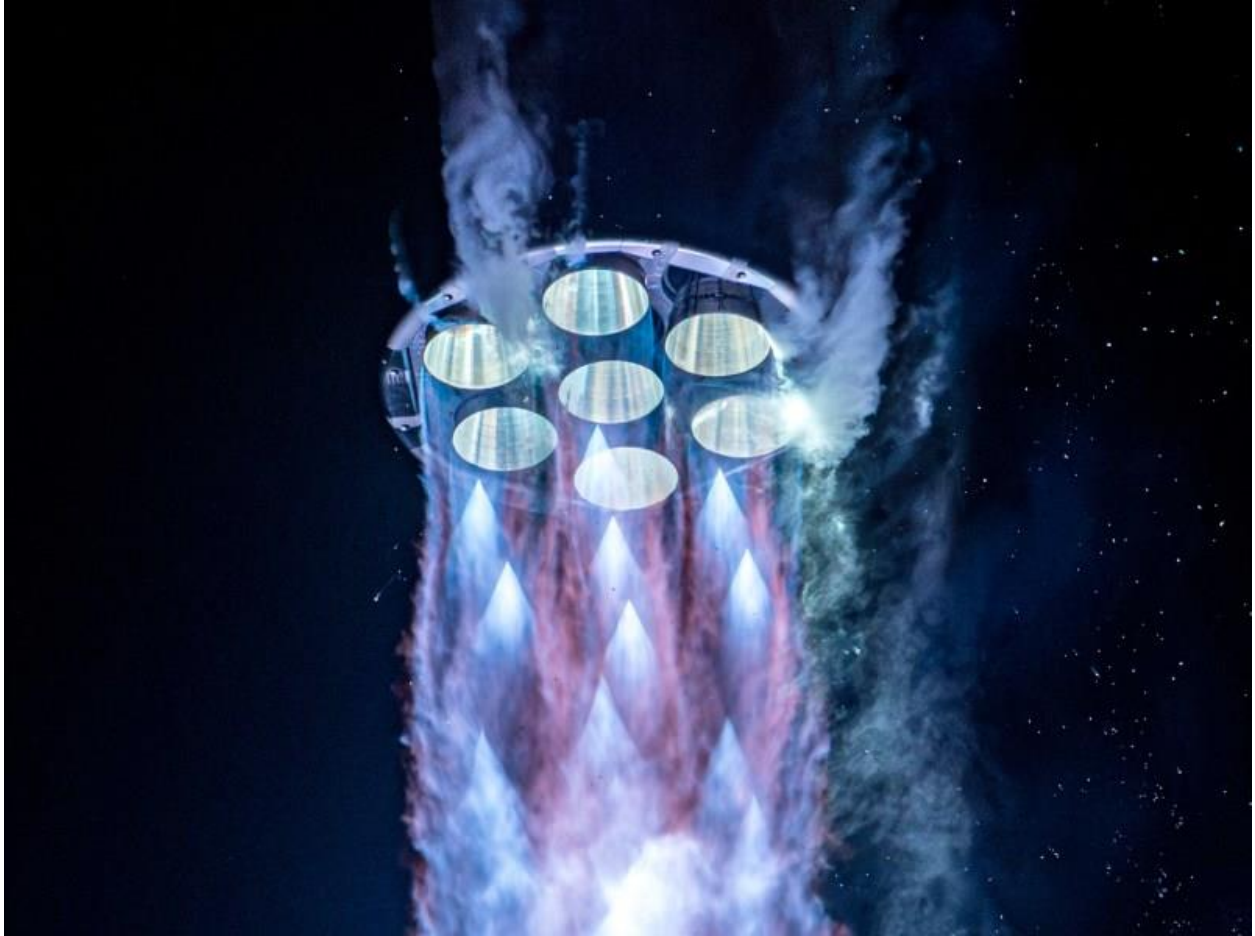
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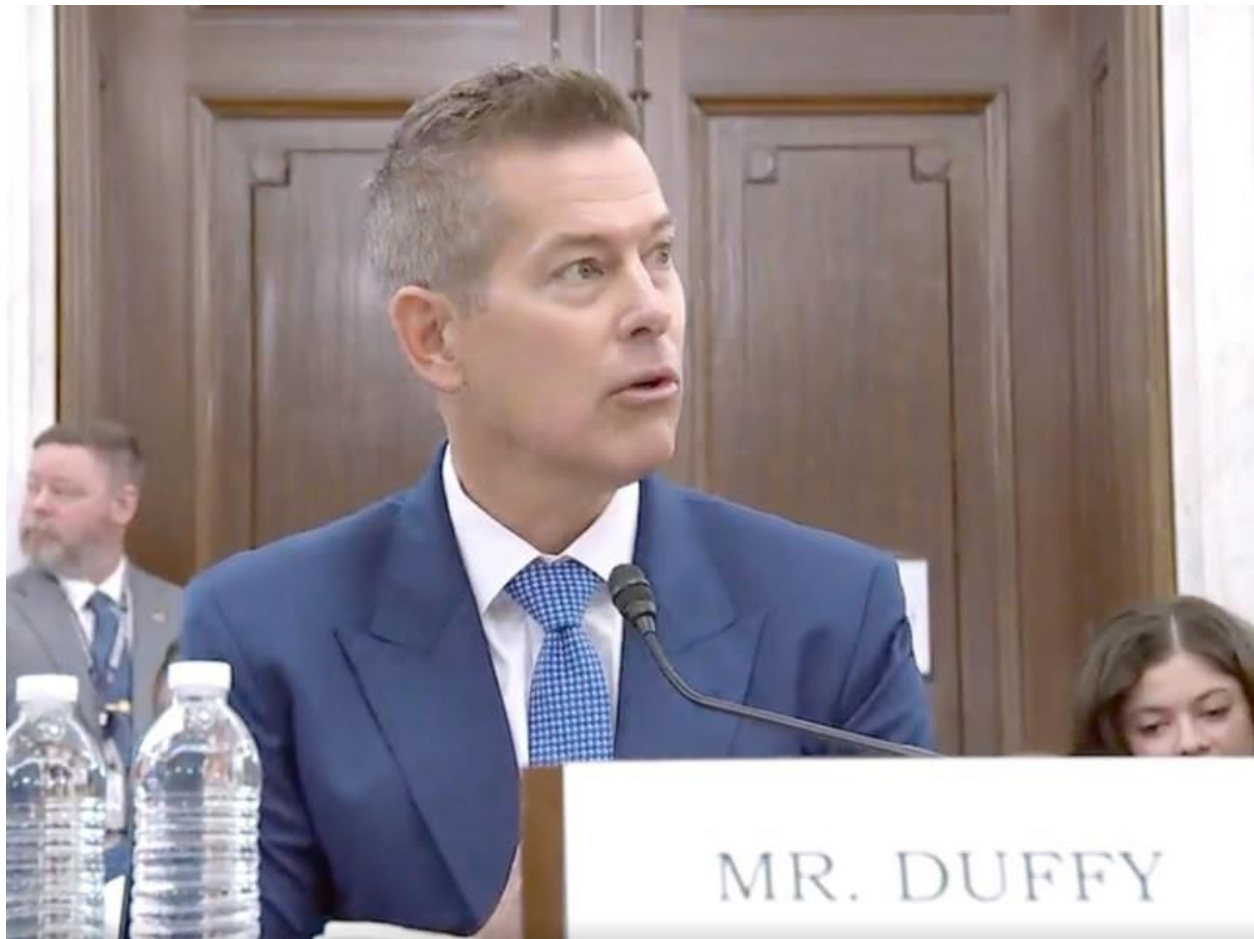
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## **FAA takes step to streamline launch licensing process**

by **Jeff Foust** December 15, 2024

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by **Jeff Foust** December 15, 2024

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Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS) on Wallops Island, Virginia, hosts launches by Northrop Grumman and Rocket Lab. Credit: Virginia Spaceport Authority

WASHINGTON — The Federal Aviation Administration is taking a step to streamline licensing for launch operators as the agency faces continues pressure to accelerate that process.

The FAA announced Dec. 13 that it will accept flight safety analyses performed by federal launch ranges in California, Florida and Virginia in applications for launch licenses under regulations known as Part 450.

That decision means that companies will no longer have to perform similar analyses specifically for the FAA as part of the licensing process. Launch companies had complained of the duplication of work needed to carry out FAA analyses in addition to those required by the ranges they were launching from.

In a statement, Kelvin Coleman, FAA associate administrator for commercial space transportation, called the move a “force multiplier” for the industry. “It also lessens the paperwork burden on the applicant and helps to speed the FAA review process.”

The issue of duplicate flight safety analyses came up in a September hearing on regulatory issues for the FAA’s Office of Commercial Space Transportation (AST) by the House Science Committee’s space subcommittee. Mike French, vice chair of the Commercial Space Transportation Advisory Committee (COMSTAC), noted “multiple or duplicative safety analyses being provide by AST and by the ranges.”

“In this area, Congress could take action to allow operators to choose whether AST or the range’s analysis can meet the regulations,” he said.

COMSTAC, [in a 2023 report](#), had recommended that FAA accept safety analyses done by federal ranges. “Where an operator is subject to Range requirements, the FAA should accept the Range’s review

and approvals and thereby significantly reduce resources required for FAA review as well as the burden on the operator,” the report stated.

In [written testimony](#) at that September hearing, David Cavossa, president of the Commercial Space Federation, endorsed that recommendation. “Importantly, AST can act *unilaterally* to solve much of this challenge. Specifically, CSF strongly supports a COMSTAC recommendation that AST accept the flight safety analysis performed by a Federal range operated by the United States Space Force,” he wrote (emphasis in original), adding that the FAA should also accept NASA flight safety analyses.

The FAA said in its Dec. 13 announcement that it would accept flight safety analyses performed by the Space Force’s [Space Launch Delta 30](#) for launches from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, [Space Launch Delta 45](#) for launches from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station and Kennedy Space Center in Florida and [NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center](#) for the Wallops Flight Facility and Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport in Virginia.

The announcement on the flight safety analyses comes as the FAA is undertaking a longer-term effort to review the Part 450 regulations. It announced in November [the creation of an aerospace rulemaking committee](#), or SpARC, that will review the regulations and make recommendations on potential changes. The SpARC started work in early December and is scheduled to complete its work late next summer.

Members of Congress are pushing the FAA to move faster, though, in reforming launch regulations and removing impediments to industry. Reps. Sam Graves (R-Mo.), chair of the House Transportation Committee, and Rob Wittman (R-Va.) [sent a letter to FAA Administrator Michael Whitaker Dec. 6](#) asking him to take “all actions short of rulemaking” to expedite the licensing process.

Whitaker has not publicly responded to the letter and will soon leave the agency. He [informed FAA employees Dec. 12](#) that he would step down as administrator effective Jan. 20, at the start of the new Trump administration. FAA administrators serve fixed five-years terms and Whitaker, who has been administrator for only a little more than a year, was not required to leave during the transition. Whitaker did not give a reason in his announcement for his departure.

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