

NASA, SpaceX prep for historic crew capsule test flight



Stepping ahead in the mission to send humans for the first time in eight years through SpaceX Crew Dragon, NASA and SpaceX have finalised the date to conduct the historic crew capsule test flight on January 7.

NASA has announced an updated schedule for the two companies on the road to sending astronauts to space from American soil - SpaceX and Boeing. However, the Musk team is riding way ahead of Boeing as NASA just announced that SpaceX will send its Crew Dragon capsule on its maiden voyage to the International Space Station as first test flight of the crew capsule. The Crew Dragon flight will be called Demo-1 (or DM-1) and can carry three astronauts, but for the first test flight, it will be a rather uncrewed and uncrewed flight.

Demo-1 will be launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Florida on January 7, 2019 and will be completed sometime before its first crewed flight in June next year. The capsule will be lifted off by the epic a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket at the same Kennedy Space Center launchpad where the Apollo 11 mission took off for the moon in 1969. And if everything goes well, the Crew Dragon can be chosen as NASA's first operational mission with commercial crew in August 2019, which will be followed by a second in December 2019.

Alongwith SpaceX, Boeing is scheduled to conduct its first uncrewed test flight is currently scheduled for March 2019, almost two months behind SpaceX. And both the private space agencies are expected to abort tests before their first crewed tests, which will happen in June for SpaceX and August for Boeing. Once these tests are completed, NASA astronauts Bob Behnken and Doug Hurley will get ready to become the first two astronauts to test the commercial spaceflight, before sending actual commercial passengers into the space.