Blue Origin will launch its first rocket of 2018 today

On Sunday, private space company Blue Origin will launch its third New Shepard rocket, according to founder Jeff Bezos. The launch is scheduled to take place no earlier than 12:13PM EDT / 11:13AM CDT, and will be live streamed.

This will be the eighth overall flight for the New Shepard, and the second flight for this particular vehicle. The first launched on April 29th, 2015 (three years ago tomorrow), but crashed. Blue Origin then successfully launched and landed its second New Shepard in November that year, and proceeded to reuse the booster for four additional launches through October 2016 before retiring it. The company launched and recovered its third rocket in its only launch of 2017 in December, and that's the vehicle that's being launched tomorrow.

Blue Origin announced that this launch will once again include its aptly-named crash dummy, Mannequin Skywalker, which will gather data on astronaut telemetry and some scientific studies. The payload will also include a sensor suite that will collect data on the pressure, noise, and environmental data in the capsule, the Schmitt Space Communicator, designed to provide Wifi to commercial space customers, as well as a series of scientific experiments.

> *Mannequin Skywalker is ready for his 2nd mission on board New Shepard. He's a little sensitive about being called a "dummy", as he will be conducting astronaut telemetry and science studies – a very important job! pic.twitter.com/h2ncpGWaTi*
>
> *– Blue Origin (@blueorigin) April 28, 2018*

The New Shepherd rocket will eventually bring passengers into space, taking them on an 11-minute flight in a capsule that will land with the help of parachutes, while the booster comes back down with a powered landing. Blue Origin has ambitions beyond just taking space tourists to orbit: it showed off its plans for its New Glenn rocket last year, ferrying cargo into orbit after it launches sometime in 2020 for the first time.

Blue Origin intends to conduct its first crewed flights for the New Shepard sometime later this year, and CEO Bob Smith said last year that his company was planning on sending its first passengers into space by 2019.

Update, April 29, 2018, 8:30AM: *Added information on the New Shepard's payload.*

Update, April 29, 2018, 9:00AM: *Updated launch time after Blue Origin delayed launch due to thunderstorms.*

Update, April 29, 2018, 9:00AM: *Updated launch time after second delay.*

https://www.theverge.com/2018/4/28/17295756/blue-origin-new-shepherd-jeff-bezos-eighth-launch-livestream