The most spectacular rocket explosion since N1 just happened in Florida



Then there is the larger Blue Moon Mark 2 lander, which is due to fly on a larger and more powerful version of the New Glenn rocket with nine first stage engines, known as 9×4. NASA is counting on the Mark 2 lander, alongside SpaceX's Starship vehicle, to carry humans to the Moon on a regular basis—and soon.

Pad infrastructure severely damaged

It is too early to determine the impacts from this failure, but they will be considerable. Early reports from sources suggest that the launch infrastructure at LC-36A is severely damaged. A source indicated that one of the lightning towers may not be salvageable, and that the transporter-erector may also be damaged beyond repair.

The company recently began construction on a second New Glenn launch site nearby, LC-36B. However, the work there is in its early stages. It is possible, however, that completing this new launch tower may be faster than rebuilding LC-36A. New Glenn almost certainly will not launch again in 2026, and frankly a launch during the first half of 2027 would be heroic given the launch site concerns.

Blue Origin has been doing a lot of developmental work on the larger 9×4 rocket, which is expected to become the workhorse of the fleet over the smaller 7×2 rocket variant that exploded on Thursday evening in Florida. It is possible that the company now throws all of its efforts into completing work on this larger rocket.

Bezos, who made his fortune from Amazon, has largely funded Blue Origin since its founding a quarter of a century ago. He has put tens of billions of dollars into the company. Fortunately for Blue Origin, he has the financial wherewithal to sustain the company through this failure and to accelerate its recovery efforts. NASA, too, will be very keen to see Blue Origin get back on its feet as expeditiously as possible.

If there’s a small silver lining, it’s that the rocket that exploded Thursday night did not carry its payload of Amazon Leo Internet satellites. They were safe, in a nearby integration facility, awaiting launch.

https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/05/blue-origins-new-glenn-rocket-just-exploded-during-a-static-fire-test/