Virgin Galactic Cleared by FAA For Passenger Space Travel

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Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic, in a statement, announced the FAA has upgraded its existing license to include passenger flights.

The company also says the approval is the first of its kind. Shares jumped 12% in premarket trading.

The journey, however, has been somewhat bumpy, Engadget reports. In December 2020, the company's test flight ended in a motor ignition failure. In February of this year, Virgin Galactic delayed its tourism flights until 2022 saying more "technical checks" were needed.

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The company then had to complete dozens of verification and validation requirements to clear the final two steps for the FAA's approval. CEO Michael Colglazier says the crewed test flight on May 22 was a success:

"We're incredibly pleased with the results of our most recent test flight… [which] performed flawlessly, and the results demonstrate the safety and elegance of our flight system. [We're confident] as we proceed toward our first fully crewed

test flight this summer.”

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The company, which began working on its mission to space in 2004, says it’s preparing for the remaining three test flights.

Unconfirmed reports also suggest Virgin Galactic is working to send Branson on a suborbital flight during the July 4 weekend, according to Business Insider. That’s two weeks before Jeff Bezos is scheduled to board his Blue Origin’s New Shepard for space on July 20.

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