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Boeing brings space jobs back to Brevard

Company to build crew capsule in shuttle hangar

Written by

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CAPE CANAVERAL — Inside a Kennedy Space Center hangar where shuttle orbiters were once prepared for flight, The Boeing Co. on Monday announced plans to assemble a privately operated spacecraft that could become the next vehicle to fly astronauts from Florida.

A package of state incentives worth up to \$50 million helped seal a first-of-its-kind deal that symbolized the space center's effort to transition from the retired shuttle program to a future that embraces commercial space operations and creates jobs.

"If anyone had any doubt that Kennedy Space Center would remain open for business, this new agreement ... should put that notion to rest," said Lori Garver, NASA's deputy administrator.

Boeing expects that work to assemble, test and refurbish its CST-100 capsule for trips to the International Space Station will create 550 local jobs by 2015, though that outcome depends on winning NASA contracts and federal funding to help develop commercial spacecraft.

Under an agreement more than a year in the making, KSC turned over use of the hangar called Orbiter Processing Facility-3 for at least the next 15 years to Space Florida, the state's aerospace economic development agency.

Space Florida in turn will lease the facility and adjacent office space to Boeing, which will base its program office for commercial astronaut flights at KSC.



Kennedy Space Center Director Bob Cabana speaks inside OPF-3 as The Boeing Co. announced Monday it will develop and manufacture the CST-100 commercial crew capsule at KSC. / Tim Shortt/FLORIDA TODAY

JOBS BY THE NUMBERS

Boeing expects the spacecraft work to create 550 local jobs:

140 jobs by 2013
410 more by 2015

Over the next year, state and company funding will renovate the 64,000-square-foot processing hangar to fit Boeing's needs, including tearing out tiers of access platforms that in recent years framed the orbiter Discovery.

An orbiter's presence could almost be felt Monday in the void between the platforms that loomed above a stage of dignitaries, including Gov. Rick Scott, as well as U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson and U.S. Reps. Sandy Adams and Bill Posey.

"You can see the outline of the space shuttle, so it's a strong reminder of the recent past," said John Elbon, head of Boeing's Space Exploration Division. "When you enter this building and see it, it kind of causes a twinge of sadness."