

NASA to test space shuttle runway program

NASA has announced a pilot program expanding access and use of the space shuttle runway at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration officials said the Zero Gravity Corp. of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., will conduct weightless flights from the runway using its Boeing 727-200 aircraft Nov. 5-6.

Passengers will predominantly be teachers who will perform simple microgravity experiments they can share with students.

The provider of weightless flights will be the first in a series of demonstration projects invited to use the landing facility to help NASA develop policy, management and operational approaches to opening the 15,000-foot runway to non-NASA use.

"We're excited to have ZERO-G come to the Shuttle Landing Facility as the first demonstration project in this effort to broaden the facility's use," said Kennedy Space Center Director Jim Kennedy.

In addition to giving passengers a brief exposure to the zero-gravity experience astronauts have while orbiting earth, the parabolic flights also offer a simulation of the gravity a person would feel on the moon and on Mars, providing a glimpse of what NASA crews will encounter.

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