

Plutonium on Next Atlas V – Bad Idea?

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- *From:* "Ed Kyle" <edkyle99@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 14 Aug 2005 20:00:08 –0700
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The next Atlas V will carry plutonium in RTGs on the Pluto New Horizons probe.

["http://www.spaceflightnow.com/atlas/av007/050814pluto.html](http://www.spaceflightnow.com/atlas/av007/050814pluto.html)

This will be the seventh Atlas V, but it will also be the *very first* Atlas V flown in the "551" configuration, with five solid boosters and a five meter fairing. According to the report above, a recent environmental impact summary stated that the "mean probability of a plutonium release during the flight is about 1 in 300".

Atlas V has had six successful launches, but only three have flown with solid motors, and there have been problems with the Atlas V solid motor development effort. One of the early solid motors failed during a ground test. I think I recall reading that Aerojet has had to certify a new "B" solid motor model to reduce acoustic loads. No Atlas V has flown with more than three solids to date.

This launch will have to be approved by President Bush. I suspect we will be hearing a *tiny* bit more about this in the coming months.

– Ed Kyle

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- ***Follow-Ups:***
 - ◆ ***Re: Plutonium on Next Atlas V – Bad Idea?***
 - ◇ *From:* Damon Hill
 - ◆ ***Re: Plutonium on Next Atlas V – Bad Idea?***
 - ◇ *From:* Alex Terrell

Plutonium on Next Atlas V – Bad Idea?

◆ *Re: Plutonium on Next Atlas V – Bad Idea?*

◇ *From: Cardman*

◆ *Re: Plutonium on Next Atlas V – Bad Idea?*

◇ *From: stork*

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