

Re: next shuttle flight fall 2006

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- *From:* "Jorge R. Frank" <jrfrank@xxxxxxxxxxx>
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David Ball <davidbemail-1q04@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in <news:lj65p116jm4f0a4ug10d27ei9497q3gcga@xxxxxxx>:

- > How many of these people who are idle in various parts of NASA could
- > be used for design work on the follow-on vehicle to the shuttle?

Some. Not a large percentage.

- > Now
- > that all the extra telemetry and video has been added so that the
- > public can watch what happens during launch, it is beginning to seem
- > like the shuttle fleet activity is going to consist of a single test
- > launch per year.

That's a misleading impression, caused by the fact that STS-114 had an unexpected large foam release from the PAL ramp (it's worth pointing out that overall foam release was dramatically decreased, as evidenced by the 80% decrease in tile dings on Discovery once she returned). STS-114 was the most heavily photographed launch in history and it was inevitable that foam releases would be seen that weren't seen on earlier launches due to the lack of cameras. There were six foam releases above the allowable levels and NASA has a probable cause for most of them and solid plans to fix them on the next tanks. The PAL ramp is the tricky one since it serves an aerodynamic purpose as well as an insulation purpose. NASA would like to remove the ramp entirely but needs to prove the aerodynamics are safe first. The flight rate will return to something looking more normal once foam release has been reduced below the allowable levels.

- > Don't get me wrong. I'm a big fan of the Manned Space Program, and I
- > understand the need to keep people on the payroll because you can't
- > get them back if you lay them off and they would lose some skills
- > while not working at NASA. Are these people just doing practice work
- > to keep their skills or could they be used to design and test
- > components for the follow-