

NASA'S SHUTTLE ATLANTIS BEGINS MISSION TO THE SPACE STATION

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The Space Shuttle Atlantis and its six-member crew are on their way to the International Space Station after lifting-off from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Fla., at 11:14:55 a.m. EDT Saturday.

"It's been almost four years, two Return to Flight missions, a tremendous amount of work by thousands of individuals to get the shuttle program back to where we are right now and that's on the verge of restarting the station assembly sequence," said Atlantis' Commander Brent Jett. "We're confident over the next few weeks, and few years for that matter, that NASA's going to prove to our nation, to our partners and our friends around the world that it was worth the wait and the sacrifice. We're ready to get to work."

The fuel cut-off sensor system, which malfunctioned and delayed Atlantis' scheduled Friday launch, performed normally Saturday. The engine cut-off, or ECO, sensor is one of four inside the liquid hydrogen section of the shuttle's external fuel tank.

Atlantis' flight, STS-115, will resume construction of the International Space Station. The shuttle and station crews will work with ground teams to install a girder-like structure, known as the P3/P4 truss aboard the station. The 35,000-pound piece includes a set of giant solar arrays, batteries and associated electronics. The arrays eventually will double the station's power capability.

Atlantis' crew includes Pilot Chris Ferguson and mission specialists Dan Burbank, Heide Stefanyshyn-Piper, Joe Tanner and Steve MacLean, a Canadian Space Agency astronaut. The shuttle is scheduled to dock

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with the station on Monday. Once Atlantis arrives, a day could be added to the 11-day mission for a focused inspection of the shuttle's heat shield.

For the latest information about the STS-115 mission and its crew, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov/shuttle>

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Jacques :-)

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