



## New Mexico Spaceport Authority

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### **ARMADILLO AEROSPACE PLANS NASA-FUNDED LAUNCHES FROM SPACEPORT AMERICA**

LAS CRUCES, NM - The New Mexico Spaceport Authority (NMSA) has announced that Armadillo Aerospace of Rockwell, Texas, plans to launch three NASA-funded tests of their vertical takeoff and landing rocket technology from Spaceport America this winter.

"These launches mark an important step in NASA's plan to empower the emerging commercial spaceflight industry to assume a greater role in the nation's space program," said Rick Homans, executive director of the New Mexico Spaceport Authority. "Spaceport America is the launch pad for this new industry, and Armadillo's decision to launch here affirms our important position."

Armadillo Aerospace is developing new vehicles that can launch small payloads to suborbital "near space", which NASA defines as altitudes between about 19 and 106 km, and return them safely to earth.

"Armadillo is proud to pioneer reusable rocket technology for the commercial space industry and Spaceport America provides the perfect place for our launches," said Neil Milburn, Vice President of Program Management at Armadillo Aerospace. "We selected Spaceport America because of its geographic advantages, dedicated staff, technical experience, flexibility and its low cost. We need exactly this kind of support to be successful."

Milburn said Armadillo will move its test operations to Spaceport America for two NASA-funded CRuSR (Commercial Reusable Suborbital Research Program) flights to 15 kilometers, under the Amateur Class III waiver, and a subsequent fully licensed or permit flight to at least 40 kilometers this winter.

Armadillo's grant will help fund flights from Spaceport America, and was made possible through NASA's CRuSR program, which establishes a series of suborbital flights that will yield many benefits to NASA by providing access to 3-4 minutes of

microgravity for experimentation, discovery and testing. According to Homans, it's NASA's goal to help private firms develop suborbital spacecraft that will eventually provide the nation with much lower-cost and much more reliable access to orbital space. Spaceport America anticipates playing a critical role in the CRuSR program.

Homans added that the Armadillo announcement comes just two weeks after the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) awarded at least \$5 million to New Mexico State University to develop a Center of Excellence for Commercial Space Transportation.

"These announcements, coming one on top of another, are big news for Spaceport America," Homans said.

Armadillo Aerospace is a leading developer of reusable rocket powered vehicles. Founded in 2000, Armadillo Aerospace has an unequaled experience base with over 200 flight tests spread over a dozen different vehicles. The company has done work for NASA and the United States Air Force, and flown vehicles at every X-Prize Cup and Northrup Grumman Lunar Lander Challenge event, including those held in New Mexico from 2006 to 2008. The firm has plans to provide a platform for civilian access to suborbital space via a recent marketing agreement with Space Adventures, Ltd.

Spaceport America has been providing commercial launch services since 2006. The state-of-the-art launch facility is under construction near Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, and is expected to become fully operational in 2011. Officials at Spaceport America have been working closely with leading aerospace firms such as Armadillo Aerospace, Virgin Galactic, Lockheed Martin, Moog-FTS, and UP Aerospace to develop commercial spaceflight at the new facility. The economic impact of launches, tourism and new construction at Spaceport America are already delivering on its promise to the people of New Mexico.

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**(For additional information and images of Spaceport America go to [www.spaceportamerica.com](http://www.spaceportamerica.com) or contact David Wilson @- 575-524-8118)**