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*A Delta IV Heavy rocket launches from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station on December 10.  
(Spectrum News)*

SPACE

## Record-Breaking Liftoffs: Commercial Space Program Logs a Busy 2020

BY [GREG PALLONE](#) | BREVARD COUNTY  
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CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Rocket launches have filled the skies over the Space Coast in 2020.

### What You Need To Know

- 30 launches on the Space Coast in 2020, another 5 in other states
- Included 2 crewed SpaceX missions to the ISS

Program," said Dale Ketcham of Space Florida.

Thirty rockets took off from Florida, five more in other states. All commercial launches came under the umbrella of the Federal Aviation Administration.

"The commercial sector is leading the way in providing launch services," said Ketcham. "Not only to the growing commercial market, but even more so they are doing the heavy lifting for NASA and the (Space Force)."

The 35 launches is a record, topping 33 set in 2018.

Missions included the first FAA licensed crewed mission to the International Space Station in May, cargo runs to the ISS, sending up the Mars 2020 rover in July, and the frequent cadence of SpaceX Starlink missions, which are penciled in whenever the launch team can get permission from the Eastern Range.

According to the FAA, it's all possible due to streamlined and modernized regulations overseeing space launch and landings under President Donald Trump's Space Policy Directive-2.

"We are going to get up into the triple digits on a regular basis with the number of launches every week, and it's going to get busy out here," Ketcham said.

The Space Coast's 31st launch of the year is scheduled for Thursday December 17 at 9 a.m. SpaceX is launching a Falcon 9 rocket on the NROL-108 mission for the National Reconnaissance Office.

## The Top 5 Space Coast Launches of 2020

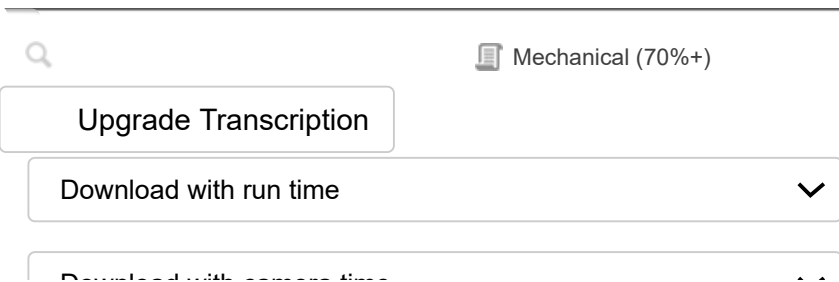
### 1. SpaceX Demo-2 Launches Astronauts into Space



A bright spot in 2020 was the May launch of the Falcon 9 rocket carrying [two astronauts to space from Kennedy Space Center](#) for the first time since the shuttle program ended.

Bob Behnken and Doug Hurley were successfully carried to the International Space Station in what was also the first commercial space mission to do so.

## 2. SpaceX Crew-1 Mission



Following the successful Demo-2 mission, SpaceX followed up with its [Crew-1 mission in November](#), sending four astronauts to the ISS this time, the first regular crew mission.

Astronauts [Michael Hopkins](#), [Victor Glover](#), [Shannon Walker](#), and [Soichi Noguchi](#) from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, will [spend six months on board the ISS](#).

SpaceX is planning Crew-2 and Crew-3 missions for 2021.

## 3. Mars Rover Perseverance Launched on Atlas V Rocket

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NASA sent another Mars rover to the Red Planet this year.

[Mars Rover Perseverance launched](#) on board an Atlas V rocket in July. The difference between this rover and its predecessors are the tools on board, including the ability to send samples of Martian soil back to Earth in 2026.

It's all part of the rover's mission to determine if life ever existed on the planet.

If Perseverance makes it to Mars, it will be the ninth Earth robot to land successfully there. We will know if the rover made it to the planet on February 18, 2021.

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#### 4. Rare Delta IV Heavy Launch Carries Satellite

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operation. It only launches once a year, if that. All of its upcoming launches in the next few years are also for the NRO.

## 5. SpaceX Starlink Missions

The last launch in the list isn't one but several. SpaceX continued launches for its Starlink missions this year, launching over a dozen missions this year and bringing the overall total to 16.

SpaceX is sending thousands of mini-satellites into orbit to build a network that will eventually provide internet access to underserved areas.

Starlink mission launches can happen whenever SpaceX has a chance to fit them in. That's certainly helped Space Florida's push to break rocket launch records.

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