

SpaceX and Boeing are on the brink of completing their Crew Dragon and Starliner capsules for NASA's Commercial Crew program, anticipating launches in early 2020, pending crucial final tests. Boeing targets an uncrewed Starliner test flight on Dec. 17, similar to SpaceX's Demo-1 mission. Ongoing safety reviews for both companies will determine whether results are made public. SpaceX is innovating with safer parachutes, potentially 10 times safer than previous versions, with up to 10 drop tests scheduled by year-end. Bridenstine stresses safety, citing challenges all human spaceflight programs encounter with parachute deployment. He commends responsible operations from both companies and underscores the importance of sharing lessons learned among partners for enhanced safety in all programs. Bridenstine emphasizes the fluidity of timelines due to the critical nature of final testing and expresses hope for swift progress towards safe launches. NASA's Commercial Crew program, initiated in 2014, aims to reduce reliance on Russian Soyuz spacecraft, with contracts awarded to SpaceX and Boeing.