



Office of the Governor

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bruce Krasnow

Bruce.Krasnow@state.nm.us

(505) 827-0226

Virgin Galactic announces Spaceship Unity and 100 employees relocating to New Mexico's Spaceport America

May 10, 2019

SANTA FE - Virgin Galactic and Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced on Friday that the space company plans to relocate more than 100 employees to New Mexico's Spaceport America as it begins to ramp up operations for commercial flights.

Virgin Founder Sir Richard Branson announced that Virgin Galactic's development and testing program had advanced sufficiently to move the spaceline staff and space vehicles to their commercial operations headquarters at Spaceport America, New Mexico. The move, which involves more than 100 staff, will commence immediately and continue through the summer.

"New Mexico delivered on its promise to build a world-first and world-class spaceport," said Branson. "Today, I could not be more excited to announce that in return, we are now ready to bring New Mexico a world-first, world-class spaceline. Virgin Galactic is coming home to New Mexico, where together we will open space to change the world for good."

Branson made the announcement in a ceremony at the New Mexico state capitol in Santa Fe. He said more than 100 employees will be moving to New Mexico to support the current staff bringing employment for Virgin Galactic at Spaceport America to approximately 150. More jobs will follow as operations progress into commercial service in the coming year, Branson said.

Gov. Lujan Grisham said the company's decision to move forward in bringing additional jobs to New Mexico reaffirms the state's decision to invest in Spaceport America. The aerospace industry is growing faster than the rest of the economy and has been identified by the governor as a target industry for economic development.

"Virgin Galactic's announcement today is an incredibly exciting development for both our state's economic future and the future of aerospace in general," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "With these workers here and with these plans firmly in place, I'm certain New Mexico will serve as the launchpad for the rapid industry growth we've been expecting for so many years. Today marks the beginning of the next chapter of aerospace in New Mexico."

Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes of the Economic Development Department said the company will be relocating engineers, mechanics, safety technicians, operations, maintenance and hospitality staff and pilots to New Mexico in the coming months. The state has an ideal climate and business environment for aerospace, Secretary Keyes said in welcoming Virgin Galactic.

“These are competitively paid jobs,” said Keyes. “These employees will be moving here, bringing their families and investing in the community. We are targeting the aerospace industry and its growth and maturation in New Mexico.”

Daniel Hicks, the chief executive officer of Spaceport America, said Virgin Galactic’s business decision is a result of strong partnerships over many years.

“Going to space and exploring the universe is a team effort. It takes strong partnerships that are courageous and also vulnerable,” said Hicks. “Sir Richard’s visionary leadership to take meaningful risks along with New Mexico leadership’s far-sighted commitment epitomizes the successful partnerships that are truly needed for the space industry. I and the rest of the Spaceport America staff are extremely excited to support Virgin Galactic’s continued growth in New Mexico.”

Spaceport America represents a \$218 million investment by the state of New Mexico. The 18,000-acre FAA-licensed facility sits adjacent to the U.S. Army’s White Sands Missile Range and has three vertical launch complexes and a 12,000-foot runway. Just 45 miles north of Las Cruces, Spaceport America has the most restricted airspace in the United States except for the sky over the White House.

To date, Spaceport America has hosted 204 vertical launches as well as student rocket and science competitions.

Virgin Galactic Chief Executive Officer George Whitesides added that the company is proud to be a part of a long history of space research and development in New Mexico.

“The first photograph of Earth from space was taken over New Mexico in October of 1946. How inspiring and appropriate that the state will soon host the first regular commercial spaceflight service, which will enable thousands of people to see Earth from space with their own eyes,” said Whitesides. “We are deeply grateful to the citizens and leadership of New Mexico for having the vision to create a better future for their children and all of humanity.”

Virgin Galactic will reposition its space system consisting of carrier aircraft VMS Eve and spaceship VSS Unity from Mojave California to Spaceport America over the summer months once cabin interior and other work has been completed by Virgin Galactic’s sister manufacturing organization, The Spaceship Company. It will complete its final test flights from New Mexico for commencing a full commercial service for passengers and research payload. TSC will remain based in Mojave where it will continue building Virgin Galactic’s planned fleet of SpaceShipTwo and (carrier aircraft) WhiteKnightTwo vehicles.

####