

The Breakfast Table Times

THE DAY'S NEWS, IN FULL

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TOP STORY

NASA Accelerates Push Toward Next Crewed Moon Missions

CAPE CANAVERAL, FLA. — NASA appears to be accelerating its timeline toward the next generation of crewed lunar missions. These missions, called Artemis II and Artemis III, mark a new chapter for the agency. Artemis II will carry astronauts on a flight around the Moon without landing, serving as a critical test ahead of Artemis III. Artemis III aims to return astronauts to the lunar surface for the first time in more than five decades. This month, NASA's administrator said he feels extremely confident that Artemis III could launch as early as 2027.

Behind the scenes, engineering teams are preparing the Orion spacecraft and the powerful Space Launch System rocket. Both will eventually carry astronauts toward the Moon on future flights. Officials say current preparations are advancing faster than those before earlier Artemis milestones. That pace suggests the program may be gaining momentum after years of scrutiny. The Artemis program has faced repeated delays and cost overruns in the past. Those issues drew criticism from congressional oversight committees and independent auditors. Hardware assembly, safety reviews, and astronaut training are now proceeding at the same time across NASA facilities.

If Artemis II and Artemis III stay on schedule, they would mark a historic return to deep space. They would be the first crewed missions beyond low Earth orbit since Apollo ended in the 1970s. These missions carry real symbolic and strategic weight for the United States and its partners. Many partner nations are contributing hardware or expertise to the effort. NASA hopes the missions will help build a lasting human presence near the Moon. That presence could eventually support future missions to Mars. Still, experts warn that a single serious technical problem could delay the schedule again. Because of that risk, the coming months of testing will be closely watched.

BACKGROUND

Artemis II is expected to fly astronauts around the Moon without landing, while Artemis III aims to land astronauts on the lunar surface for the first time since the Apollo era.

Why it matters: A successful, on-schedule Artemis program would mark the United States' first crewed missions beyond low Earth orbit in more than 50 years.

What to watch: Watch for further hardware milestones, safety reviews, and any schedule updates as NASA works toward a possible 2027 Artemis III launch.

Source: NASA (nasa.gov/mission/artemis-ii/); Spaceflight Now (spaceflightnow.com/2026/08/14/nasa-administrator-extremely-confident-in-artemis-3-launch-in-2027/); NASA Artemis blog (nasa.gov/blogs/artemis/2026/08/)

GOVERNMENT

Congress Races Against the Clock to Avert a Shutdown

WASHINGTON — Congress is racing to pass a federal budget bill before funding expires this fall. Senate Republicans control the chamber and want to move quickly. Lawmakers just returned from their August recess with a packed schedule. A government shutdown happens when Congress cannot agree on spending bills for federal agencies. During a shutdown, many offices close and thousands of workers go without pay.

This year's budget fight matters even more because midterm elections are just months away. In November, voters will decide who controls the House and Senate. Both parties want to avoid a shutdown that could upset voters. Still, disagreements remain over spending levels and other policy add-ons. In recent years, Congress has used short-term funding patches to buy extra time. Lawmakers could use a similar patch again if a full deal is not ready.

Groups tracking the talks say negotiators are closer than they were earlier this summer. Some key details are still being ironed out by both parties. If Congress fails to act, federal workers could go without pay. National parks could close and some services families rely on could be delayed. The Congressional Budget Office is also monitoring the negotiations closely. Analysts say a resolution could come within the next few weeks.

BACKGROUND

The United States experienced a government shutdown in 2025, and negotiators are hoping to avoid a repeat this year.

Why it matters: A shutdown could delay pay for federal workers and disrupt government services many families use, right before an important election.

What to watch: Watch for whether Congress passes a full budget or another short-term funding patch before the fall deadline, and how the fight shapes messaging heading into the midterms.

Source: The Washington Post ([washingtonpost.com/business/2026/08/03/spending-trump-nominees-top-hectic-senate-agenda-ahead-august-break/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2026/08/03/spending-trump-nominees-top-hectic-senate-agenda-ahead-august-break/)); Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget (crfb.org/blogs/congress-could-end-government-shutdown-drama-once-and-all/); Conference Board (conference-board.org/research/policy-backgrounders/congress-moves-closer-to-avoiding-government-shutdown)

SCIENCE & TECH

Rocket Booster Assembly Advances Ahead of Next Artemis Flight

CAPE CANAVERAL, FLA. — Engineers at NASA's Kennedy Space Center are steadily building solid rocket boosters. These boosters will help launch the next Artemis Moon mission. So far, workers have stacked four of the ten required segments. The segments are being assembled inside High Bay 3, a large rocket-assembly building. Each segment must be carefully aligned before the next one is added. That process leaves little room for error.

The boosters work alongside the core stage of NASA's Space Launch System, called SLS. Together, they provide much of the thrust needed to lift the rocket off the pad. The boosters separate from the rocket a couple of minutes into flight. Once the full SLS rocket is ready, it will help send Orion and its crew toward the Moon. NASA officials say hardware progress on this mission is moving faster than it did before the previous Artemis flight.

This booster work supports two upcoming milestones for NASA's Moon program. Artemis II will fly astronauts around the Moon without landing. Artemis III aims to land astronauts on the lunar surface. NASA's administrator has said he feels extremely confident about launching Artemis III in 2027. Even so, the agency continues detailed hardware and software testing. Officials caution that a major spaceflight schedule can shift if new technical issues appear.

BACKGROUND

Booster stacking is one of many hardware milestones NASA must complete before its next crewed Moon missions, Artemis II and Artemis III.

Why it matters: *Steady hardware progress signals NASA is on track for its next crewed Moon flights after previous schedule delays in the Artemis program.*

What to watch: *Watch for updates on the remaining booster segments and whether NASA keeps pace with plans for a 2027 Artemis III landing attempt.*

Source: NASA Artemis blog (nasa.gov/blogs/artemis/2026/08/); Spaceflight Now (spaceflightnow.com/2026/08/14/nasa-administrator-extremely-confident-in-artemis-3-launch-in-2027/)

SPORTS

Yankees, Red Sox Split Doubleheader in High-Stakes Series

NEW YORK — The New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox are engaged in a tense four-game series at Yankee Stadium, with meaningful postseason implications for both teams. Both clubs are fighting for position in a crowded American League playoff race. On Friday night, New York won the series opener, 1-0, in a tightly contested, well-pitched game. First baseman Paul Goldschmidt supplied the only run with a solo home run. Left fielder Cody Bellinger delivered a strong throw home to end a Boston scoring threat in the seventh inning.

The two clubs returned Saturday for a doubleheader that made up a game postponed by rain back in June. Boston claimed the opener, winning 6-0 to even the weekend series. The teams played a second game later that same day at Yankee Stadium. Following Saturday's results, New York's overall record stood at 76-59 for the season.

Every game in this series carries added weight for two teams still hoping to reach October. A strong finish over these final weeks could help determine which clubs secure a postseason berth. Bullpen usage and lineup decisions throughout the series are being scrutinized closely by fans and analysts alike. The rivals are scheduled to complete their four-game set before shifting attention to the closing stretch of the regular season. Both franchises still have considerable work ahead to secure a place in a congested American League playoff picture. Decisions made by New York's coaching staff in the coming days could meaningfully shape the team's push toward the postseason.

BACKGROUND

Saturday's doubleheader opener served as a makeup for a game postponed by rain on June 6, as part of a four-game series between the two rivals.

Why it matters: *With the regular season nearing its end, the results factor directly into playoff positioning in a tight American League Wild Card race.*

What to watch: *Watch how both bullpens hold up over the doubleheader and whether Boston completes a series sweep or New York rebounds to close out the four-game set.*

Source: ESPN (espn.com/mlb/game/_/gameId/401874913/red-sox-yankees, espn.com/mlb/game/_/gameId/401816702/red-sox-yankees); MLB.com (mlb.com/stories/game/823501)

OUR TEAMS

New York Yankees

Lost Game 1 of Saturday's doubleheader to Boston Red Sox, 6-0

The opener at Yankee Stadium made up a game rained out in June; the Yankees also played Game 2 later that day as part of a four-game series with playoff stakes.

SPORTS (CONT.)

Giants Close Out Preseason, Shift Focus to Regular Season

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — The New York Giants closed out their preseason schedule Friday night with a 23-6 victory over the New York Jets. The finale gave coaches one final opportunity to evaluate players still competing for limited roster spots. Head coach John Harbaugh's staff used four exhibition games this summer to assess depth across multiple position groups. Every NFL team must trim its roster down to the number permitted under league rules before the regular season begins.

With exhibition play now complete, the Giants shift their attention to the regular-season opener against the Dallas Cowboys. Preseason results do not count in the standings, but these games often shape which players make the final roster. They also influence who earns a starting role once the season begins. Teams around the league typically use the final preseason week to finalize lineups and address lingering injury concerns.

For the Giants, the transition from exhibition play to meaningful games raises the stakes immediately. Every contest now factors directly into the team's playoff aspirations for the season ahead. Fans and analysts will watch closely to see whether August's roster decisions pay dividends once the games count. The season opener against Dallas offers an early test of how the reshaped roster performs under real pressure. Giants officials hope a strong start can build momentum for a sustained playoff push this year. Coaches will also monitor early injuries closely as the team settles into its regular-season routine.

BACKGROUND

The Giants finished the preseason with a 23-6 win over the Jets on Aug. 28, capping four exhibition games before the regular season begins.

Why it matters: Preseason performances often influence roster decisions that shape a team's chances once real games begin.

What to watch: Watch for final roster cuts and how the Giants perform in their season opener against Dallas.

Source: ESPN (espn.com/nfl/game/_/gameId/401873303/giants-jets); NBC New York (nbcnewyork.com/news/sports/giants/watch-giants-jets-preseason-game-live/6541605/)

OUR TEAMS

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SOUTHERN MAINE

Shark Sightings Keep Southern Maine Beachgoers On Alert

PORTLAND, MAINE — Shark sightings along the southern Maine coast have drawn steady attention from local news outlets this summer. The Portland Press Herald and other regional outlets have published several stories tracking the sightings near popular beaches. While no serious injuries have been reported, the coverage has kept beachgoers and officials talking about ocean safety.

Marine scientists say sightings can rise for several reasons. Warmer water and baitfish moving closer to shore can draw predators into shallow areas. Sightings do not necessarily mean danger is increasing. Often, they simply reflect normal seasonal patterns along the coast. Even so, officials and lifeguards have used the attention to repeat basic safety tips. These include swimming near a lifeguard and avoiding spots where fish are schooling. Experts also advise leaving the water calmly if a shark is spotted nearby. Local lifeguards say most sightings so far this season have ended without incident.

Tourism and beach visits support much of southern Maine's summer economy. That makes balancing public awareness with avoiding unnecessary alarm important for officials and reporters. Southern Maine communities plan to keep monitoring the coastline as summer winds down. Additional sightings could prompt updated guidance from lifeguards and marine safety officials in the weeks ahead. Beachgoers are encouraged to check local advisories before heading into the water this Labor Day weekend.

BACKGROUND

Maine news outlets have been documenting a string of shark sightings along the southern coast throughout the summer, though no serious injuries have been reported.

Why it matters: Public safety messaging matters for a coastal state where tourism and swimming are central to summer life.

What to watch: Watch for updated safety guidance from lifeguards and town officials if sightings continue as summer ends.

Source: Portland Press Herald (pressherald.com/2026/08/13/explore-shark-sightings-southern-maine/)

SOUTHERN MAINE (CONT.)

Severe Storms Leave Trail of Damage Across Southern Maine

SOUTHERN MAINE — A round of sudden, severe thunderstorms tore across southern Maine in recent days. The storms brought strong winds and hail to several communities. Reports described downed trees, scattered power outages, and minor damage to roofs and vehicles. The fast-moving storms arrived with little advance warning, catching some residents off guard as calm weather turned severe quickly.

Utility crews and public works teams worked through the aftermath. They focused first on clearing blocked roads and restoring power. Officials said essential services and heavily damaged streets came first. Less urgent repairs followed once the main problems were handled. Meteorologists say late-summer storms in New England can intensify quickly. That often happens when warm, moist air meets a passing weather front.

Emergency officials are using the storms as a safety reminder. They urge residents to keep flashlights, batteries, and weather alerts ready. Families should also have a plan for quick shelter if storms return. More unsettled weather is possible before summer turns to fall. Southern Maine communities are being encouraged to watch changing forecasts closely. Local insurance agents expect a rise in claims related to wind and hail damage over the next several weeks. Officials say full cleanup could take several more days in the areas hit hardest by fallen trees and debris.

BACKGROUND

The storms brought hail and strong winds to parts of southern Maine, causing scattered damage and power outages.

- Why it matters:** Sudden severe weather can strike quickly in late summer, and being prepared helps keep families safe.
- What to watch:** Watch for updated cleanup timelines and any additional severe weather as the season turns toward fall.

Source: WGME (wgme.com/news/local/sudden-storm-brings-strong-winds-hail-to-southern-maine-weather-rain-thunder)

GOOD NEWS

Acton Fair Marks 161 Years as Maine Tradition Continues

ACTON, MAINE — The Acton Fair opened this week in southern Maine. It marks the 161st year of one of the region's most enduring end-of-summer traditions. Like many agricultural fairs in New England, it began generations ago. Farmers once used the fair to show off livestock, produce, and crafts after the growing season. Today, the fair still features farm animal exhibits and competitions. It also includes modern additions like carnival rides, live music, and fair food.

Organizers say the event draws visitors of all ages from across the region. Many families return year after year to the same favorite rides and food stands. The fair also gives local 4-H clubs and small vendors a chance to showcase their work. That work often raises money supporting programs throughout the year. For many small Maine towns, fairs like Acton's support the local economy each summer.

Fair season in Maine usually runs from midsummer into early fall. Towns across the state host similar agricultural fairs with their own traditions. Supporters say these events help preserve rural traditions for younger generations. They also give kids a firsthand look at farming and animal care. As the Acton Fair continues, organizers expect steady crowds throughout its run. The mix of nostalgia and community spirit has kept the tradition alive for more than a century and a half.

BACKGROUND

The Acton Fair has been held for 161 years, making it one of the longest-running agricultural fairs in southern Maine.

- Why it matters:** Community fairs like this support local economies, youth programs such as 4-H, and long-standing rural traditions.
- What to watch:** Check the fair's schedule for remaining days and events before it wraps up this season.

Source: WGME (wgme.com/news/local/161st-acton-fair-underway-in-southern-maine)