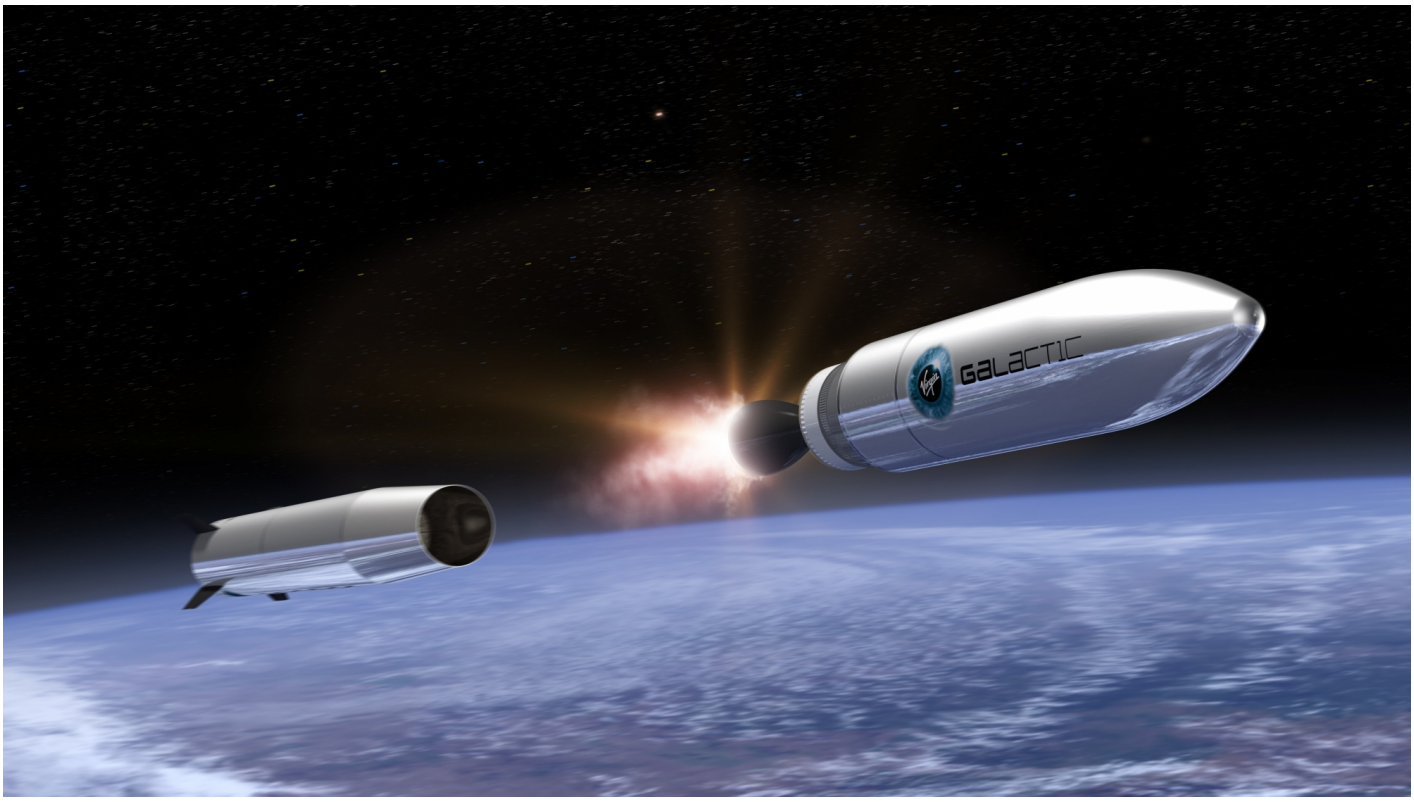
VIRGIN GALACTIC'S LAUNCHERONE INCREASES PAYLOAD PERFORMANCE TO MEET DEMAND

News / Manufacturer



Robust demand from the growing small satellite market has led **Virgin Galactic** to significantly increase the performance of its LauncherOne satellite launch service, the company announced today at the annual World Business Satellite Week in Paris.

Driven by strong commercial demand for a launch service that can reliably, affordably, and responsively launch small satellites, Virgin Galactic has nearly doubled the amount of payload that customers can deliver to orbit for the same price.

For a price below US $10 million, **LauncherOne** will now be able to launch 200 kg into the standard Sun-Synchronous Orbit most commonly desired by small satellite missions, a marked increase from the system’s originally projected performance to that orbit. Customers will also be able to purchase further increases in performance to the same orbit, as well as launches that reach other altitudes or inclinations. To lower LEO orbits, the system will be capable of launching over 400kg of **payload**.

As an air-launched system, LauncherOne can optimize each mission to customer requirements by operating from any of a variety of launch sites independent from the fixed, often congested, launch ranges and corresponding real-time launch constraints such as weather. Virgin Galactic is in the final stages of acquiring a commercial aircraft to add to its air launch fleet, which includes WhiteKnightTwo, enabling both the increased payload capacity and significantly higher flight rate.

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The company expects to finalize the acquisition in the coming months.

With a dedicated carrier aircraft and strong technical results achieved in an intensive hardware component testing campaign that began in 2013, this performance increase has been achieved by increasing the tank sizing of the rocket, maintaining schedule and launch price while significantly increasing value to customers. With full, private funding already committed to the program, a dedicated and world-class team of 150 experienced aerospace professionals hard at work, and a state-of-the-art 14,000 m2 (150,000 square foot) manufacturing and design facility in Long Beach, California, LauncherOne remains on target to be the most flexible and responsive launch vehicle to offer affordable, dedicated launches to smaller satellites.

Virgin Galactic revealed that these changes—which have been in work for many months and revealed publicly today—were driven by demand from commercial and government customers. With class-leading payload accommodations and the ability to accommodate both standard and customized form factors, LauncherOne appeals to a broad variety of satellite mission designs. LauncherOne's customer base includes firms such as global communications company OneWeb, which Virgin Galactic recently signed to one of the largest commercial launch orders in history for flights of its internet service satellites on LauncherOne.

Virgin Galactic CEO George T. Whitesides said: "The market has spoken, and we have listened: we have roughly doubled the payload for our customers without increasing the price. LauncherOne will be ready to meet the rapidly expanding needs of satellite startups, space agencies, and research institutions thanks to the investments we've already made in our engines, tanks, avionics, and our production infrastructure. Demand has become so significant that LauncherOne will have its own dedicated aircraft. Small satellites are big business, and we look forward to supporting satellite innovators to make history in space and to improve lives here on Earth."

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