

Amazon's Project Kuiper delays satellite timeline, opens Washington hub

July 1 2024, by Lauren Rosenblatt, The Seattle Times



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As Amazon celebrated the opening of a Kirkland, Washington, manufacturing facility for its broadband network Project Kuiper, the company pushed back its timeline for launching satellites.

At a ribbon-cutting event to formally open the 172,000-square-foot facility, Steve Metayer, Project Kuiper's vice president of production operations, said the company will have its first load of production satellites ready for launch at the end of this year and will make testing available for certain customers in early 2025.

That's a delay from earlier Project Kuiper estimates that production satellites would be ready for launch in the first half of this year.

But, Metayer said, the new manufacturing facility in Kirkland is built for speed.

"Traditional communication satellites typically take years to build," he said. "But we want to be able to get service to our customers as soon as possible. That means we need to be able to build, test and ship and launch satellites at a much, much faster rate.

"This entire facility is designed with that mission in mind."

Amazon's Project Kuiper, which started in 2019, aims to use a network of 3,000 low-Earth-orbit satellites to bring [broadband access](#) to areas that don't currently have a reliable internet connection. It successfully launched prototype satellites in October, bringing it one step closer to launching production satellites and getting its broadband network off the ground.

Project Kuiper's license with the Federal Communications Commission, received in 2020, requires it to have 1,600 satellites in space by mid-2026.

Brian Huseman, Amazon's vice president of public policy and [community engagement](#), said that Project Kuiper has all the regulatory approvals it needs in the United States. It will secure permits in other countries as it rolls out its network, Huseman said.

"Building advanced communications satellites at this scale is incredibly complex, and we want to ensure every Kuiper spacecraft meets our standards for performance, reliability, and safety," Metayer said in a statement. "The progress from the team is so impressive, and we now have the foundational pieces in place to ramp production ahead of a full-scale deployment."

In the broadband access race, Project Kuiper is competing with Elon Musks' SpaceX, which has an office in Redmond. SpaceX flew its first Starlink satellites in 2018 and has since launched more than 5,000 satellites using its own rockets.

Project Kuiper is hopeful the new manufacturing facility in Kirkland will help it make up ground. At its peak capacity, the factory will be able to produce five satellites per day.

One way to speed up production is to cut the time it takes to test each individual satellite from months to days, Metayer said. That would come from mass manufacturing the satellites, which would allow the company to see where it could tweak the testing process, he continued.

"If you're building hundreds of thousands of these, you can, over time, statistically, determine what is correct. What do you need to test for? What don't you need to test for?" Metayer said. "As we ramp up, every [satellite](#) we test, we gain knowledge."

Project Kuiper has so far hired 120 employees at the new Kirkland facility, which officially opened its doors in April. It plans to hire a total

of 200 workers to staff the manufacturing hub.

In addition to its Kirkland site, Project Kuiper has a Redmond facility where it completes all the research and development for its satellites and has plans to open a logistics hub in Everett, where it will collect and sort supplies needed to put the satellites together.

On Thursday, at the ribbon cutting for the Kirkland manufacturing hub, Sen. Maria Cantwell said Project Kuiper's work is helping to make the Puget Sound region "the Silicon Valley of space."

Washington's space economy is a \$70 billion industry that supports 250,000 jobs, according to Cantwell and Washington's Department of Commerce.

"Today represents another big step in that space economy for Washington," Cantwell said.

"Kuiper's deployment of over 3,000 low-Earth-orbit satellites is critically important to America's competitiveness," Cantwell said.

"The CHIPS and Science Act was literally about how to have innovation happen in more places," she continued. "Well, guess what's key to that? Having broadband access in more places."

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Citation: Amazon's Project Kuiper delays satellite timeline, opens Washington hub (2024, July 1) retrieved 1 July 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2024-07-amazon-kuiper-delays-satellite-timeline.html>

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