

SATURN/APOLLO STAGE STATUS

(Presented by T. D. Smith, Senior Director, Saturn/Apollo Programs,
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I've talked to you gentlemen before—I think this is the third year. Today, I've got a rather unpleasant duty; I've got to tell you about one of the most serious incidents we've ever had in the program. And I think it bears taking a moment to reflect that the reason the Saturn/Apollo program has had such tremendous flight success is because we put the money we have into ground testing and redundant testing and this incident, as unpleasant and unfortunate as it is, it was better to have it happen at Sacramento than at the Cape.

So with that, I thought before I started the basic Saturn briefing, I would tell you a little bit about the loss of the S-IVB stage at our Sacramento Test Center. It was down-played with the other incident at the Cape the following week. But this one is our problem, we think we have it solved, and we think you are entitled to know about it.

On January 20, we were static firing the third Saturn V/S-IVB (fig. 1) at Sacramento. I was in the blockhouse. It was a very smooth countdown. It was about 4:30 in the afternoon, about 10 minutes from the time we planned to ignite the engine.

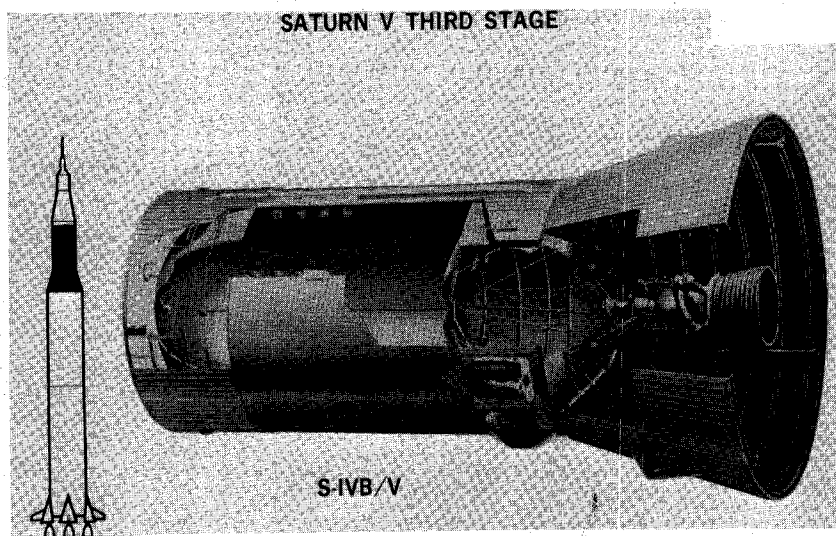


FIGURE 1

As you know, we simulate the entire Saturn flight during these static tests. At simulated S-IC liftoff, we do exactly the same things we would on the pad at the Cape. We pressurize our propellant tanks,