

Four Key Spaceport Questions Answered!

1) What is a spaceport?

- The FAA does not define what a Spaceport is.
- Think of it as an airport that deals with vehicles flying higher than the average passenger plane (35 - 40,000 ft).
- Our vehicles start at that altitude and have gone up to 77 miles.

2) Why did New Mexico choose to build the first commercial spaceport?

- New Mexico is the birthplace of the US Space and Missile Program.
- Robert Goddard began testing rockets in the 1930s in Roswell.
- White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) starting in the 1940s.
- White Sands Testing Facility has been involved in every NASA mission since the Apollo era.
- All images from the ISS/ Hubble come through Las Cruces (NASA's TDRSS ground station) before being seen anywhere else in the world.
- A total of 12 men have walked on the moon. Two of them are from New Mexico: Edgar Mitchell was raised in Artesia and the last man to walk on the moon, Harrison Schmitt, is from Silver City.
- Discussions of the spaceport began in the 1990s. NMSU's Physical Science Lab was a key player in what started as the Southwest Regional Spaceport. Momentum grew after one of Richard Branson's collaborations won the Ansari X-Prize in 2004. He and then-Governor Bill Richardson signed an agreement that led to establishing the Spaceport Authority in 2005. Construction of Spaceport America began in 2006.
- Benefits: WSMR restricted airspace, good weather, and 4,600 ft above sea level 😊

3) Who owns and operates Spaceport America?

- New Mexico taxpayers own Spaceport America - not Virgin Galactic.
- New Mexico invested in Spaceport America so that taxpayers can benefit from being part of the growing aerospace industry. (Employment, Education, Exposure, Economic Growth, etc.).

4) What companies use Spaceport America?

- Virgin Galactic flies its Unity Spaceship, WhiteKnight Mothership, and several practice airplanes here. Their spaceflight in July 2021 made New Mexico the third state to fly humans to space.
- SpinLaunch uses kinetic energy to launch projectiles.
- AeroVironment & HAPS Mobile use unmanned aerial vehicles to create cell towers in the sky and have other satellite-like capabilities.
- UP Aerospace is a taxi service for scientific payloads that want to experience microgravity for short periods. (One of their rockets went 77 miles high.)
- The US Air Force's Thunderbirds conduct their winter training here.