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Jan. 15, 2010

MEDIA ADVISORY : M10-006

Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel Releases Annual Report

WASHINGTON -- The Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel, or ASAP, a congressionally mandated group of independent experts established after the 1967 Apollo 1 fire, has released its 2009 annual report.

Following the 2003 space shuttle Columbia accident, Congress directed the ASAP to submit an annual report to Congress and the NASA administrator documenting the panel's observations and recommendations. This year's report advises NASA on issues that have potential to directly or indirectly impact the safety of astronauts, NASA personnel, contractors, programs and missions.

"The panel's report provides a summary of key safety-related issues the agency confronts at this time," ASAP Chairman Joseph W. Dyer said. "The most important relate to the future of the nation's human spaceflight program. Critical safety issues the panel reviewed include human rating requirements for potential commercial and international entities, extension of the shuttle beyond the current manifest, the workforce transition from the shuttle to the follow-on program, the need for candid public communications about the risks of human spaceflight, and more aggressive use of robots to reduce the

risk of human exploration."

Some of the panel's critical safety findings in the 18-page report include:

- No manufacturer of Commercial Orbital Transportation Services is currently qualified for human-rating requirements, despite some claims and beliefs to the contrary.
- To abandon the program of record as a baseline for an alternative without demonstrated capability or proven superiority is unwise and probably not cost-effective.
- Extension of the shuttle program significantly beyond the current manifest would be ill-advised. The panel is concerned about discussions regarding possible extension of shuttle operations.

For more information about the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel and to view the 2009 report, visit:

<http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/oer/asap/index.html>

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