



Two Earth Return Missions in Two Months: Rocket Lab Demonstrates Rapid Re-entry Capability with Third Pioneer Spacecraft for Varda Space Industries

May 14, 2025

Designed and built by Rocket Lab, the Pioneer spacecraft hosted Varda's capsule on orbit for 60 days

LONG BEACH, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 14, 2025-- Rocket Lab USA, Inc. (Nasdaq: RKLB) ("Rocket Lab" or "the Company"), a leading launch and space systems company, today announced its record turnaround of two Earth return missions in two months with its latest successful mission and Pioneer spacecraft for Varda Space Industries ("Varda"), a leading orbital pharmaceuticals and hypersonic re-entry logistics company. Rocket Lab successfully supported the return to Earth of Varda's W-3 capsule at 02:07 a.m. UTC on May 14, the third overall successful operation in the W-series of Varda missions.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20250513132144/en/>



Rocket Lab's Pioneer spacecraft successfully supported the return of Varda's W-3 capsule to Earth, landing at the Koonibba Test Range in South Australia, operated by Southern Launch. Credit: Rocket Lab

For the second time this year, Rocket Lab's highly configurable, medium delta-V spacecraft platform, Pioneer, delivered Varda's hypersonic re-entry capsule back to Earth. To date, Rocket Lab has successfully

built, tested, integrated, and managed on-orbit and de-orbit operations for three of the four [contracted missions](#) for Varda.

Rocket Lab's first mission for Varda, W-1, was the world's first space manufacturing mission conducted outside of the International Space Station. W-1 [completed on-orbit operations in February 2024](#), positioning their re-entry capsule for landing at the Utah Test and Training Range near Salt Lake City, Utah. The [Company's second Pioneer spacecraft successfully entered](#) Varda's W-2 capsule a year later, landing at the Koonibba Test Range in South Australia, operated by Southern Launch. The third Pioneer spacecraft for Varda's W-3 mission launched just [15 days after successful re-entry and landing](#) of the W-2 mission on March 14.

Each Pioneer spacecraft for Varda's W-series missions delivered critical mission functions for Varda's 120kg capsule including power, communications, propulsion, and attitude control. The Pioneer spacecraft was designed, built, and tested at Rocket Lab's Spacecraft Production Complex and headquarters in Long Beach, California. Rocket Lab's Pioneer spacecraft platform uses the Company's vertically integrated components and systems, including star trackers, propulsion systems, reaction wheels, solar panels, flight software, radios, composite structures, tanks, separation systems, and more.

"Managing three successful missions for Varda in just over a year is a testament to our team's ability to produce tailored spacecraft for our customer's specific needs quickly and efficiently," said Rocket Lab founder and CEO Sir Peter Beck. "Our Pioneer spacecraft consistently proves its rapid re-entry capability, versatility, and reliability, delivering critical mission functions that continually push the boundaries of space technology. Varda's missions showcase Rocket Lab's commitment to groundbreaking advancements in space manufacturing and re-entry logistics, and we're immensely proud to be a part of these achievements."

"Varda's third successful reentry represents a new era in the commercialization of low Earth orbit," said Dave McFarland, Varda's Vice President of Hypersonic and Reentry Test. "The rapid succession of our missions demonstrates that this is a capability both Varda, and our partners can consistently rely on."

The fourth spacecraft in Varda's W-series is currently undergoing integration and testing at Rocket Lab's Spacecraft Production Complex and headquarters in Long Beach, California.

+ About Rocket Lab

Founded in 2006, Rocket Lab is an end-to-end space company with an established track record of mission success. We deliver reliable launch services, satellite manufacture, spacecraft components, and on-orbit management solutions that make it faster, easier, and more affordable to access space. Headquartered in Long Beach, California, Rocket Lab designs and manufactures the Electron small orbital launch vehicle, a family of spacecraft platforms, and the Company is developing the large Neutron launch vehicle for constellation deployment. Since its first orbital launch in January 2018, Rocket Lab's Electron launch vehicle has become the second most frequently launched U.S. rocket annually and has delivered more than 200 satellites to orbit for private and public sector organizations, enabling operations in national security, scientific research, space debris mitigation, Earth observation, climate monitoring, and communications. Rocket Lab's spacecraft platforms have been selected to support NASA missions to the Moon and Mars, as well as the first private commercial mission to Venus. Rocket Lab has three launch pads at two launch sites, including two launch pads at a private orbital launch site located in New Zealand and a third

launch pad in Virginia. To learn more, visit www.rocketlabusa.com.

+ Forward Looking Statements

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. We intend such forward-looking statements to be covered by the safe harbor provisions for forward looking statements contained in Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act") and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"). All statements contained in this press release other than statements of historical fact, including, without limitation, statements regarding our launch and space systems operations, launch schedule and window, safe and repeatable access to space, Neutron development, operational expansion and business strategy are forward-looking statements. The words "believe," "may," "will," "estimate," "potential," "continue," "anticipate," "intend," "expect," "strategy," "future," "could," "would," "project," "plan," "target," and similar expressions are intended to identify forward-looking statements, though not all forward-looking statements use these words or expressions. These statements are neither promises nor guarantees, but involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other important factors that may cause our actual results, performance or achievements to be materially different from any future results, performance or achievements expressed or implied by the forward-looking statements, including but not limited to the factors, risks and uncertainties included in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024, as such factors may be updated from time to time in our other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC"), accessible on the SEC's website at www.sec.gov and the Investor Relations section of our website at www.rocketlabusa.com, which could cause our actual results to differ materially from those indicated by the forward-looking statements made in this press release. Any such forward-looking statements represent management's estimates as of the date of this press release. While we may elect to update such forward-looking statements at some point in the future, we disclaim any obligation to do so, even if subsequent events cause our views to change.

+ About Varda:

Varda Space Industries is expanding the economic bounds of humankind by designing and building the infrastructure needed to make low Earth orbit accessible to industry, from in-orbit production equipment to reliable and economical reentry capsules. The company operates out of El Segundo, California with office and industrial production space. You can follow Varda on X (@vardaspace) and LinkedIn.

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