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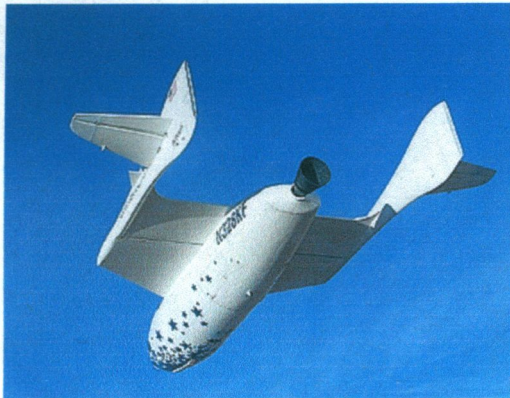
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Commercial Space Tourism May Spike Black Carbon Emissions

Opening of America's first spaceport and expectation of 1000 suborbital flights a year create new source of warming pollution

By Joan Oleck

Nov 5, 2010



Commercial space travel on private rocket ships took a major step toward reality on Oct. 25 with the dedication of a nearly two-mile-long runway at the [Spaceport America](#) "operating hub" north of Las Cruces, N.M. Each flight will take passengers 62.5 miles above the Earth into weightless space, remain there four or five

minutes, and then return to Earth.

On hand was Sir Richard Branson, chairman of the Virgin Group; Bill Richardson, New Mexico's governor and the former U.S. Energy secretary; and about 30 civilian "future astronauts" planning space travel via Branson's company, [Virgin Galactic](#).

But at a time when a half-dozen U.S. companies are vying to be the first to bring tourists to space, a report to be published in November in the journal [Geophysical Research Letters](#) warns that fuel emissions from such rocket