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The payload bay of the Discovery shuttle  
NASA

## **Don't Sell Bad Shuttle Parts to NASA**

*A man faces 15 years in jail for doing so*

It appears that NASA has been the victim of a fraud that could have caused the loss of a spacecraft and of its crew. A 60-year-old man named Richard Harmon, working at Cornerstone Machining Inc., close to Houston, Texas, was involved in the development of a complicated part for a NASA space shuttle, called a passive flight releasable attachment mechanism interface plate (FRAMIP). Unfortunately, something went wrong along the way. Very wrong.&nbsp;It seems that the piece was damaged during the manufacturing process, reducing its durability by as much as 40%. The tool is used to hold the shuttle's payload and crew in place, and to secure them during flights. A loose or weakened FRAMIP could have determined the cargo to become loose, destroying it, as well as the shuttle in the process. The worst part of this is that Harmon's reaction was not even by far the right thing to do in such a case.&nbsp;Instead of coming clean about it, he chose to cover up his mistake and welded the piece, providing false papers that stated that the object had been devised according to NASA's standards. "Harmon is alleged to have covered up the damage by causing it to be welded without informing Spacehab. Harmon is accused of delivering the part to Spacehab without disclosing the damage and falsely certifying the materials and processes used in machining the part complied with the requirements of applicable drawings," reads the statement of the local US Attorney's office, cited by [UniverseToday](#).&nbsp;"Had NASA not discovered the damage and used the damaged part as planned, it could have cracked open during flight, allowed cargo to come loose and, possibly, resulted in the loss of the spacecraft and personnel aboard," shared Tim Johnson, Houston's acting U.S. Attorney. If the accusations are found to be true, the 60-year-old Harmon risks a fine of \$500,000 and spending his next 15 years in jail.