

Beat: Vips

Jay Leno to leave NBC's Tonight Show after 22 years

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USPA News - Veteran U.S. late-night television host Jay Leno announced Wednesday that he will step down next year as the host of the "Tonight Show" after more than two decades, clearing the way for "Late Night" talk show host Jimmy Fallon to take over. The network said Fallon, when he takes over as host in spring 2014, will take the popular show back to its original home at 30 Rockefeller Plaza in New York City.

Emmy Award-winner Lorne Michaels, of "Saturday Night Live" and "30 Rock", will serve as the show's executive producer. "Congratulations Jimmy. I hope you're as lucky as me and hold on to the job until you're the old guy. If you need me, I'll be at the garage," Leno, 62, said in a press release from NBC Entertainment. Fallon said he is excited to host a show that "starts today instead of tomorrow," referring to his current show that airs after midnight ET. Leno has hosted "The Tonight Show" since he took over the reins from television icon Johnny Carson in 1992, and made the show television's highest-rated late-night show. But having recently made fun of his bosses and the network's poor ratings, relations between Leno and the network had become strained. "Jay Leno is an entertainment icon, making millions of people laugh every weeknight for more than 20 years," said Steve Burke, CEO of NBC Universal. "His long reign as the highest-rated late-night host is a testament to his work ethic and dedication to his viewers and to NBC." Burke said the network was making the change "purposefully" at a time when Leno is number one among late-night hosts. "Jimmy Fallon is a unique talent and this is his time. I'm thrilled he will become the sixth host of `The Tonight Show` at exactly the right moment, in conjunction with our coverage of next year's Winter Olympic Games from Sochi, Russia," Burke said. He also thanked the current `Tonight Show` team for producing the show for the past two decades. NBC said programming plans for its 12:35 a.m. ET time period, which is currently reserved for Fallon, are still in development.

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