

NASA grounds shuttle fleet

July 28 2005

NASA Wednesday ordered the nation's shuttle fleet grounded until scientists determine how much damage occurred during Discovery's Tuesday liftoff.

Bill Parsons, space shuttle program manager, said there was evidence of debris falling during the Tuesday launch, but he said: "Are we losing sleep over it? Not yet."

Discovery, which completed the first full day of its 12-day mission Wednesday, is scheduled to return to Cape Canaveral in Florida Aug. 7.

Falling debris from the shuttle Columbia in 2003 was blamed for its destruction upon re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere and the deaths of all seven crew members.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's chief flight director, Paul Hill, said NASA engineers' "first blush, when they looked at this, was it wasn't going to be a significant problem."

But he said engineers subsequently saw "some things" recorded during the launch that caused "some concern," CNN reported.

Hill said NASA scientists were analyzing data to decide what action, if any, needed to be taken.

"We should start seeing the jury coming in on those decisions by the end of the crew's day (Thursday)," Hill said. "My guess is we're not going to

have a problem."

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