

Discovery lands safely in California

August 9 2005



The space shuttle Discovery and its crew of seven landed safely Tuesday, one day behind schedule at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

Image: This NASA video image shows the US space shuttle Discovery touching down

The 14-day mission glided to a stop in darkness at 5:11 a.m. PDT in the Mojave Desert as mission control announced simply: "Discovery is home."

Earlier Tuesday, NASA scrubbed two opportunities for Discovery to land at its primary site at the Kennedy Space Center because of stormy weather off the Florida coast.

Controllers were tense as the shuttle began re-entry, the first time since

February 2003 when the shuttle Columbia broke up at that stage, killing all seven aboard.

The crew woke Tuesday to the sounds of the Beatles' "Good Day Sunshine," and controllers said the astronauts were in good spirits.

"We do appreciate your patience and good humor with the situation," mission control told the crew, to which mission commander Eileen Collins replied, "We're not surprised at all."

The first steps the astronauts took from the orbiter were into the Crew Hatch Access Vehicle, where they were given a brief medical examination.

Mission commander Eileen Collins was the first astronaut to leave the access vehicle and walk onto the runway. The group took a walk around Discovery to see how their ship fared during its 14-day mission.

"We brought Discovery back in great shape," Collins said after the walk-around, CNN reported.

The 5:11 a.m. PDT landing marking the end of the 14-day mission occurred one day behind schedule because of unacceptable weather conditions Monday and early Tuesday over the preferred landing site in Florida,

It was the 50th shuttle landing at Edwards.

Mission control in Houston marked the event by simply declaring, "Discovery is home."

The flight was the first for the space shuttle program since the 2003 break up on re-entry of space shuttle Columbia and the resulting death of

its seven-member crew.

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