

Hubble astronauts begin training

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The U.S. astronauts selected for the next servicing mission to the Hubble Space Telescope are beginning their training this week.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration astronauts are at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., for their first formal crew orientation.

Goddard engineers and managers are briefing the crew about the space telescope's operations, facilities and hardware and discussing the mission's five scheduled spacewalks. The astronauts will install two new science instruments and perform upgrades to the observatory.

During their Goddard training the astronauts will split time between classroom activities and exercises in a cleanroom that houses replicas of Hubble's electrical and equipment bays and actual flight hardware.

Veteran astronaut Scott Altman will command the final shuttle mission to Hubble, with Navy Reserve Capt. Gregory Johnson serving as pilot. Other crew members include veteran spacewalkers John Grunsfeld and Mike Massimino and first-time space fliers Andrew Feustel, Air Force Col. Michael Good and flight engineer and robotic arm operator Megan McArthur.

The Hubble Space Telescope is a joint NASA and European Space Agency project. NASA said the servicing mission, expected to launch next year, will extend Hubble's life until 2013.

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