

NASA Undersea Mission Begins

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NEEMO 11 crew member works near the undersea habitat "Aquarius" during a session of extravehicular activity for the NASA Extreme Environment Mission Operations (NEEMO) project. Image credit: NASA

Three astronauts and a Constellation Program aerospace engineer began a 10-day NASA mission in the ocean depths off the Florida coast Aug. 6. They will test lunar exploration concepts and a suite of long-duration spaceflight medical objectives.

Veteran space flyer and aquanaut Nicholas Patrick is leading the undersea mission aboard the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Aquarius Underwater Laboratory.

NASA Astronaut Richard Arnold, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency

(JAXA) Astronaut Satoshi Furukawa and systems integration engineer Christopher Gerty complete the crew.

During the NASA Extreme Environment Mission Operations 13 (NEEMO 13), the crew are conducting a variety of undersea "moon walks" to test concepts for future lunar exploration using advanced navigation and communication equipment.

“This crew will work much more independently from the mission control team than on previous missions,” said NEEMO Project Manager Bill Todd of the United Space Alliance at NASA’s Johnson Space Center in Houston. “This autonomous mode of operation will encourage the crew to make real-time decisions about daily operations similar to what we think will be necessary for lunar and Mars missions. The idea is to show how procedures and training for future missions can be adapted, considering the reduced direct communication with Mission Control those crews will encounter.”

Visit the [NOAA Web site](#) for more on Aquarius, including a virtual dive to the underwater habitat.

Source: NASA

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