

Smell of smoke halts space walks

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NASA barred spacewalks while experts search for the source of a smoky smell in a space suit worn during a ground test in Houston, officials said Tuesday.

Initial examinations haven't found evidence of burning in the test suit, air filters and other materials inside the suit, the Houston Chronicle reported.

The ban could be lifted in time for a pair of walks outside the international space station scheduled for next week and three walks planned during a December shuttle assembly mission to the space outpost.

"Every test so far has been normal," Mission Control communicator Shannon Lucid told Peggy Whitson, the station's commander. "We hope to have a 'go' to use them by tomorrow."

The smoky odor was reported late last week during a test of a space suit assigned for use on a future mission. The test at the Johnson Space Center was halted without injury to any of the test participants.

As a precaution, the ban was imposed until engineers could determine whether there had been burning that could indicate potential problems with National Aeronautics and Space Administration space suits, NASA spokeswoman Brandi Dean said.

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