

Astronauts get extra work done in 1st spacewalk (Update)

November 19 2009, By MARCIA DUNN , AP Aerospace Writer



In this image taken from video, space shuttle Atlantis crewmen Michael Foreman and Dr. Robert Satcher, Jr., install a space antenna outside the International Space Station, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2009. (AP Photo/NASA)

(AP) -- A pair of spacewalking astronauts, one of them a surgeon, hustled through antenna and cable work outside the International Space Station on Thursday and even whipped off an extra chore.

Atlantis crewmen Michael Foreman and Dr. Robert Satcher Jr. had a spare antenna installed in just two hours after venturing out on the first spacewalk of their mission. They also hooked up cables and a handrail, and greased some mechanisms, zooming two hours ahead at one point.

"You guys are rocking the house," astronaut Randolph Bresnik called from inside the linked shuttle-station complex.

As Satcher - the first orthopedic surgeon in space - lubricated snares for a robot arm, Bresnik observed "it is a thing of beauty to see the good doctor at work."

"We have photographic evidence of the highest recorded orthopedic surgery - ever," Bresnik said.

Foreman, meanwhile, had his hands full of wire ties needed to secure a slew of cables and other gear. He joked before the mission he was known as the wire-tie king, and that he was going after the 100 mark. His crewmates inflated it just a bit.

"Welcome to the thousand wire-tie club, Mike," Bresnik said.

Foreman, a veteran spacewalker, couldn't resist some humor of his own while floating 220 miles above the planet.

"Hard to believe, Bobby, I think your feet look bigger from space," Foreman teased.

The hardest job was one they weren't even supposed to tackle Thursday. They jumped ahead and released a cargo platform, after struggling with a stubborn brace. They had to hammer and wiggle the brace to free it, and lost a small metal piece in the process. The one-eighth-inch sliver, apparently part of a screw, floated harmlessly away.

Foreman and Satcher fielded congratulations from their colleagues at the end of the 6 1/2-hour [spacewalk](#). Shuttle commander Charles Hobaugh promised them something to eat and a chance to relax.

Two more spacewalks are planned - on Saturday and Monday - to perform more space station maintenance and get the orbiting outpost ready for the next shuttle visitors.

Atlantis will remain at the space station until Wednesday.

Already, the 12 space travelers have unloaded several tons of pumps, tanks and other big spare parts that came up on Atlantis. They took care of that just hours after the shuttle docked at the station Wednesday.

All the gear should keep the space station operating well past next fall's shuttle retirement.

The shuttle is the only craft large enough to haul these oversize pieces for the space station. That's why NASA is so keen on flying the parts now, long before they're needed.

NASA plans to keep the outpost running until at least 2015.

Five more shuttle missions remain, all devoted to space station work.

Astronaut Nicole Stott, who's winding up a nearly three-month space mission, celebrated her 47th birthday Thursday. She'll have to wait until the shuttle brings her back at the end of next week to blow out her candles. Flames are verboten in orbit.

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