

Be frank with trapped miners, NASA tells Chile

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A team of NASA experts in Chile to share the US space agency's experience in having men endure extensive periods of isolation told officials Tuesday to be totally frank with the 33 miners trapped underground for months to come.

The four-man team said it advised Chilean Health Minister Jaime Manalich and Mining Minister Laurence Golborne and other officials to avoid conveying "false hopes" to the trapped men.

"It's important not to build false hopes and its also important to be honest with our patients -- in this case with the miners," NASA's deputy chief medical officer James Duncan, explained to reporters in Santiago.

The miners' experience and expectation that rescue would take a long time at the depth they were at had to be taken into account, he said, drawing parallels with the training and professionalism of astronauts.

"Keep in mind that the miners do this for a living, so they know exactly how long it will take, they know how deep they are in the mine. So it's not like this is going to be a big surprise to them," he said.

Chilean officials have already told the miners they had a long wait to be rescued, but have avoided giving dates. Engineers overseeing drilling operations to get them out, though, have estimated three to four months will be required.

The [NASA](#) team underlined that supplies and services officials were already dropping to the trapped men -- water, food, air, communication with their families -- were primordial to keeping morale high.

"It's all working for trying to keep their spirits up," Duncan said.

With Duncan were the other three members of the NASA team: space health expert Albert Willard Holland, head of space medicine James Davis Polk, and chief engineer Clint Cragg.

Manalich said he hoped to learn from NASA how to boost nutrients in food being given to the [miners](#) to stave off illness, and hailed Holland as a psychologist very well versed in prolonged isolation cases.

The NASA team was to travel to the scene of the mine drama, in Copiapo, on Wednesday.

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