

# Space shuttle worker falls to death at launch pad

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(AP) -- A space shuttle worker fell to his death Monday at the launch pad, the first fatality there in decades, NASA officials said.

Medics rushed to the pad, but were unable to revive him. He was identified as James Vanover, an engineer for United Space Alliance, a NASA contractor. Neither the company nor NASA released any details, including where he was working on the pad when the accident occurred Monday morning.

The chief executive officer of United Space Alliance, Virginia Barnes, said the company is providing full support to the accident investigation.

"Until that investigation is complete, it would be inappropriate to provide further comment on the details," she said in a statement.

NASA spokesman Allard Beutel said work on space shuttle Endeavour was suspended for the day. The focus, for now, is on offering grief counseling to the work force, he said.

Endeavour is due to blast off April 19 on its final flight. The shuttle arrived at the pad last week.

Officials at Kennedy believe it's the first launch pad fatality since 1981, just before the very first shuttle flight.

**More information:** NASA: <http://www.nasa.gov/shuttle>

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