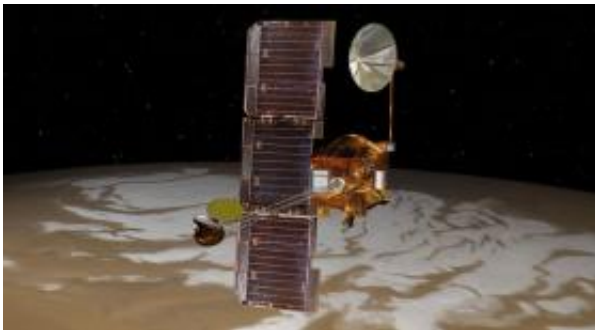


NASA troubleshoots problem on Mars Odyssey orbiter

June 9 2012



Artist concept of Odyssey. Image credit: NASA/JPL

(AP) — A NASA spacecraft orbiting Mars is in safe mode after it detected a problem.

The Mars Odyssey, which has been circling the red planet since 2001, noticed something odd with one of its gyroscope-like devices that helps control its orientation and entered standby mode as a precaution Thursday evening.

It's a common action for [spacecraft](#) to take when something unexpected occurs. In safe mode, Mars Odyssey ceases science activities but is in contact with Earth.

"The spacecraft is safe, and information we've received from it indicates the problem is limited" to that one part, mission manager Chris Potts of

NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory said in a statement Friday.

Engineers are troubleshooting the problem and drawing up a plan to resume normal operations before August when NASA's newest rover, the one-ton Curiosity, was scheduled to land near the Martian equator to begin a two-year investigation.

The longest-running Mars spacecraft, Mars Odyssey has gone into [safe mode](#) several times in the decade it's been in operation. Unlike previous instances, it didn't have to reboot its computer this time because the issue was limited to the gyroscope-like device.

Besides snapping pictures of the Martian surface, one of Mars Odyssey's main jobs is to communicate with spacecraft on the ground. NASA planned to use [Mars Odyssey](#) and the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter to monitor Curiosity's landing.

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Citation: NASA troubleshoots problem on Mars Odyssey orbiter (2012, June 9) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-06-nasa-problem-mars-odyssey-orbiter.html>

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