

# Australian jet in Antarctica rescue mission

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An Australian medical team and government jet have been dispatched to Antarctica to attempt a landing on an ice runway to rescue a sick scientist from the United States' McMurdo Station base.

The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD), a branch of the government's environment department, said the US National Science Foundation (NSF) had requested assistance in the tricky emergency mission.

NSF spokeswoman Debbie Wing said no US aircraft were available so Australia agreed to loan an Australian A319 Airbus to fly the patient out. The Royal New Zealand Air Force will provide search-and-rescue coverage for the flight.

"The Australian team will be positioned in Christchurch, New Zealand later today and will fly to McMurdo Station when weather and light permit," the AAD said in its statement.

Antarctica is emerging from a six-month period of night and Wing said the pilots plan to arrive at an ice runway near the station during a "period of twilight at mid-day that could assist pilots in landing."

She did not identify the patient but said he or she "is currently stable but may require immediate [corrective surgery](#) best delivered at a more capable facility than available at McMurdo."

AAD director Tony Fleming said all nations with an interest on the icy continent "work together very cooperatively in these sorts of [emergency](#)

situations in Antarctica to provide support when and as required."

Medical evacuations from Antarctica are relatively infrequent, with the last such rescue taking place in October 2011, when a US scientist was airlifted from McMurdo after suffering a stroke at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station.

Approximately 30 nations operate permanent research stations in Antarctica including the US, China, Russia, Australia, Britain, France and Argentina.

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