

NASA's Curiosity rover to be back online next week

March 5 2013



This image released by NASA on February 7, 2013, taken onboard NASA's Mars rover Curiosity, shows a self-portrait of NASA's Mars rover Curiosity. NASA's Curiosity rover, which has been exploring Mars since it landed to much fanfare last August, should be running at full capacity next week, after a memory glitch set the robot back.

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On February 28, controllers put the rover into "minimal activity safe mode," when they switched the machine's operations to a [backup computer](#) after detecting malfunctions in the primary computer's flash memory.

"We are making good progress in the recovery," [Mars Science Laboratory](#) Project Manager Richard Cook, of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, said in a statement late Monday.

The statement said the rover exited safe mode on Saturday and its [high gain antenna](#) went back online on Sunday.

Now controllers are evaluating the once-primary "A-side" computer to see if it can be repaired to act as a back up, while performing diagnostics with the "B-side" computer to get it up to full function.

"We need to go through a series of steps with the B-side, such as informing the computer about the state of the rover—the position of the arm, the position of the mast, that kind of information," Cook said.

The team has yet to determine what caused the [memory problems](#), NASA said, but emphasized that the rover never lost contact with Earth.

The six-[wheeled robot](#), with 10 scientific instruments on board, is the most sophisticated ever sent to another planet.

The \$2.5 billion Curiosity mission, which is set to last at least two years, aims to study the Martian environment and to hunt for evidence of water in preparation for a possible future manned mission.

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