

# NASA suspends space capsule recovery test in ocean (Update)

February 21 2014

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This Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2014 photo released by NASA shows crews testing a test version of Orion's forward bay cover, NASA's next-generation space capsule. NASA and the Navy suspended the test Thursday, Feb. 20, 2014 off the coast of San Diego after a problem was discovered. (AP Photo/NASA)

A training exercise designed to showcase the government's ability to recover a space capsule at sea was scrubbed after NASA ran into trouble off the Southern California coast, the space agency said Friday.

Crews had difficulty tying down a mock-up of the Orion capsule aboard an amphibious warship off the shores of San Diego.

NASA said cables attached to the capsule weren't strong enough to handle turbulence and snapped off twice while it was in the well deck of the USS San Diego before it could be moved out to sea on Thursday.

With the Orion mock-up still on the Navy ship, teams could not practice fetching the spacecraft from the ocean.

"Even though the testing didn't go as we had planned, we're learning lessons that will help us be better prepared to retrieve Orion," Bill Hill of NASA headquarters said in a statement.

Engineers were troubleshooting the problem, and it was not clear when the test would be rescheduled.

NASA has been developing a next-generation spacecraft to carry astronauts beyond low-Earth orbit, possibly to an asteroid or Mars. Orion, which will make its first unmanned test flight this fall, is being designed to travel to deep space and return at speeds of 25,000 mph (40,232 kph) by splashing down into the Pacific.



This Wednesday Feb. 19, 2014 photo released by NASA shows a test version of the Orion spacecraft, tethered inside the well deck of the USS San Diego prior to testing between NASA and the U.S. Navy. NASA and the Navy suspended the test Thursday, Feb. 20, 2014 off the coast of San Diego after a problem was discovered. (AP Photo/NASA)

The water landing is a throwback to the 1960s and 1970s when Navy ships routinely tracked and recovered Mercury, Gemini and Apollo spacecraft after re-entering Earth's atmosphere.

With the space shuttle fleet retired, NASA has decided to go with an ocean splashdown. Unlike in the past, when helicopters would hoist astronauts after a mission, the new plan calls for an amphibious transport ship to dispatch divers and small boat teams to recover Orion and its crew.

Last year, NASA and the Navy practiced recovering the Orion in the

calm waters of the Elizabeth River in Virginia with no problem.

Before the latest test was called off, NASA said crews successfully retrieved parts of the spacecraft, including the parachute and a protective covering.

NASA Administrator Charles Bolden was supposed to visit the test site Saturday, but his appearance was canceled.

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