

# Astronauts resume routine spacewalks for NASA (Update)

October 7 2014, by Marcia Dunn

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In this image taken from NASA TV, American astronaut Reid Wiseman works outside the International Space Station on Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2014. Wiseman and German spaceman Alexander Gerst are performing NASA's first routine maintenance outside the International Space Station in more than a year. (AP Photo/NASA)

Two spacewalking astronauts moved an old, broken pump into

permanent storage Tuesday, NASA's first routine maintenance outside the International Space Station in more than a year.

American Reid Wiseman and German Alexander Gerst, both first-time spacewalkers, cheerfully completed the long overdue job 260 miles (418.41 kilometers) up.

"I can't wait to see these pictures," Gerst said.

U.S.-based spacewalks were curtailed in July 2013 after an Italian astronaut nearly drowned because of a flooded helmet. NASA solved the problem with the suit's water-cooling system. Then concern arose over the spacesuit batteries.

New batteries arrived late last month, clearing the way for Tuesday's spacewalk and another one scheduled for next week.

Gerst clutched the 780-pound pump—about the size of a double-door refrigerator—as he rode on the end of the station's big robot arm. The crane swung him from the pump's temporary location to the new permanent spot in about 12 minutes.

"You should see my view right now," Gerst said, referring to the sprawling space station, lit up like gold in the darkness.

The pump ended up in short-term storage during urgent spacewalking repairs to the station's ammonia-cooling system last December. NASA did not want to waste time back then parking the pump in its long-term garage, given all the spacesuit worries. So the job was deferred—until now.

With Wiseman looking on, Gerst slid the pump into its permanent slot, a large rectangular sheath formed by white protective blankets, and then

bolted it down. "Nice work," Mission Control radioed.

The spacewalkers hustled through their other chores—replacing a camera light and installing a power-relay device for the station's robot-arm railcar—before calling it quits.

As the six-hour excursion drew to a close, Wiseman thanked the hundreds if not thousands of people who worked on NASA's spacewalk recovery team over the past year.

"Alex and I, we'd like to express just our huge gratitude for getting us back into planned EVAs (spacewalks), safely outside, safely back in," Wiseman said. EVA is NASA talk for extra-vehicular activity.

"It's a good day for NASA" and the European Space Agency, he added.

A follow-up spacewalk is scheduled for Oct. 15 to further whittle down NASA's lengthy to-do list, on hold since the 2013 close call. That spacewalk will be conducted by Wiseman and fellow American Butch Wilmore, a newcomer.

A week after that, two of the three Russians on board will perform a spacewalk on their country's side of the orbiting outpost. The Moscow-led spacewalks were unaffected by NASA's spacesuit troubles.

NASA considered December's U.S. spacewalks—to replace the failed ammonia pump and thereby restore full cooling to the space station—too important to wait. The same went for a critical spacewalk by Americans in April to replace a dead computer.

The helmets used by Wiseman and Gerst contained absorbent pads and makeshift snorkels in case of water leakage. The items became mandatory following last year's close call experienced by Italian

spacewalker Luca Parmitano, safely back on Earth for nearly a year now.

As for the spacesuit batteries, NASA sent up replacements on the latest SpaceX cargo ship and Russian Soyuz capsule. Ground testing uncovered a potential fuse problem earlier this year, and NASA opted to switch out the batteries on board.

**More information:** NASA:

[www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/station/main/index.html](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/main/index.html)

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Citation: Astronauts resume routine spacewalks for NASA (Update) (2014, October 7) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2014-10-astronauts-resume-routine-spacewalks-nasa.html>

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