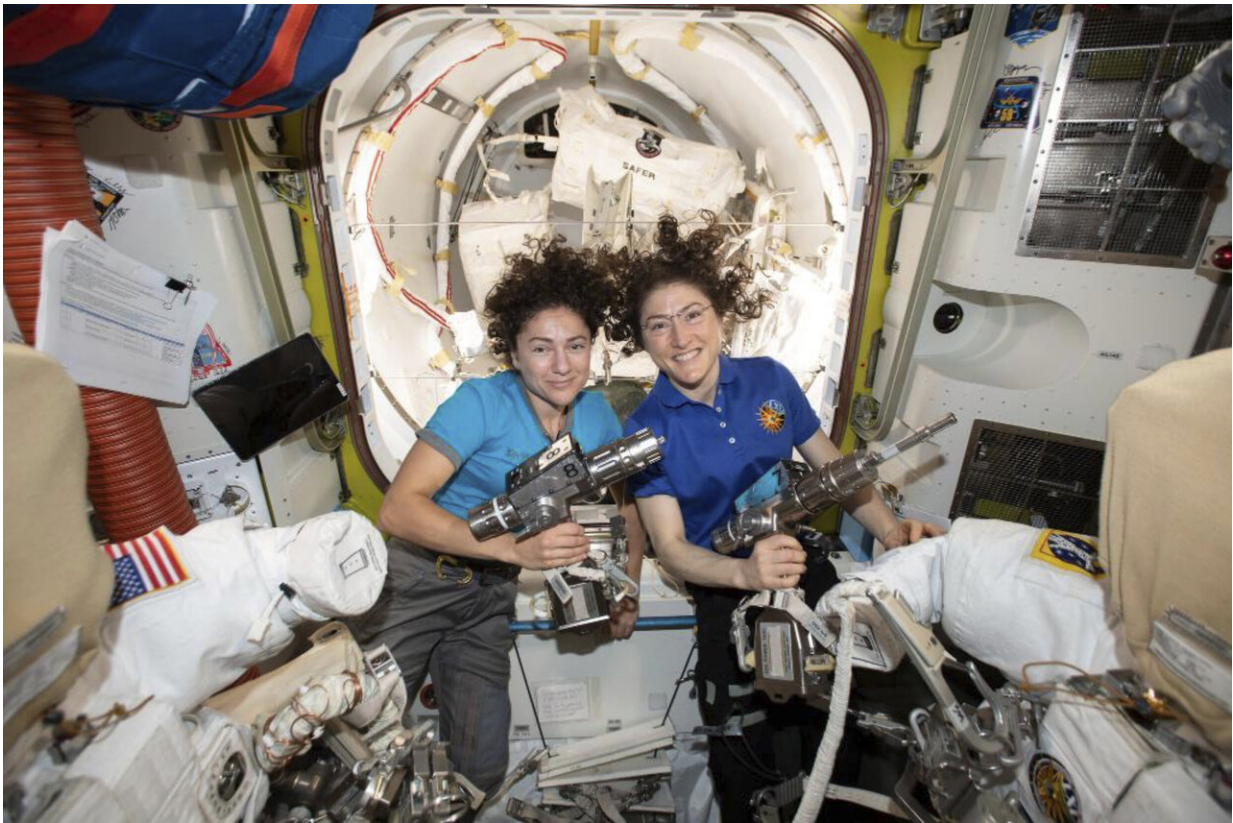


Space station's 2 women prep for 1st all-female spacewalk

October 17 2019, by Marcia Dunn



In this photo released by NASA on Thursday, Oct. 17, 2019, U.S. astronauts Jessica Meir, left, and Christina Koch pose for a photo in the International Space Station. On Friday, Oct. 18, 2019, the two are scheduled to perform a spacewalk to replace a broken battery charger. (NASA via AP)

Men have floated out the hatch on all 420 spacewalks conducted over the

past half-century.

That changes Friday with spacewalk No. 421.

NASA astronauts Christina Koch and Jessica Meir will make "HERstory," as NASA is calling it, with the first all-female spacewalk. All four men aboard the International Space Station will remain inside, as Koch and Meir go out to replace a broken battery charger.

The battery charger failed after Koch and a male crewmate installed new batteries outside the space station last week. NASA put the remaining battery replacements on hold to fix the problem and moved up the women's planned spacewalk by three days.

NASA, meanwhile, is asking schoolteachers to share photos of their students celebrating "HERstory in the making." The pictures might end up on the spacewalk broadcast.

Russia holds claim to the first spacewalk in 1965 and also the first spacewalk by a woman in 1984. The U.S. trailed by a few months in each instance.

As of Thursday, men dominated the spacewalking field, 213 to 14.

Meir, a marine biologist who arrived at the orbiting lab last month, will be the 15th female spacewalker. Koch, an electrical engineer, already has done three spacewalks; she's seven months into an 11-month spaceflight that will be the longest by a woman.

NASA planned the first all-female spacewalk in March, but had to call it off because of a shortage of medium-size suits. Koch put together a second medium over the summer.

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