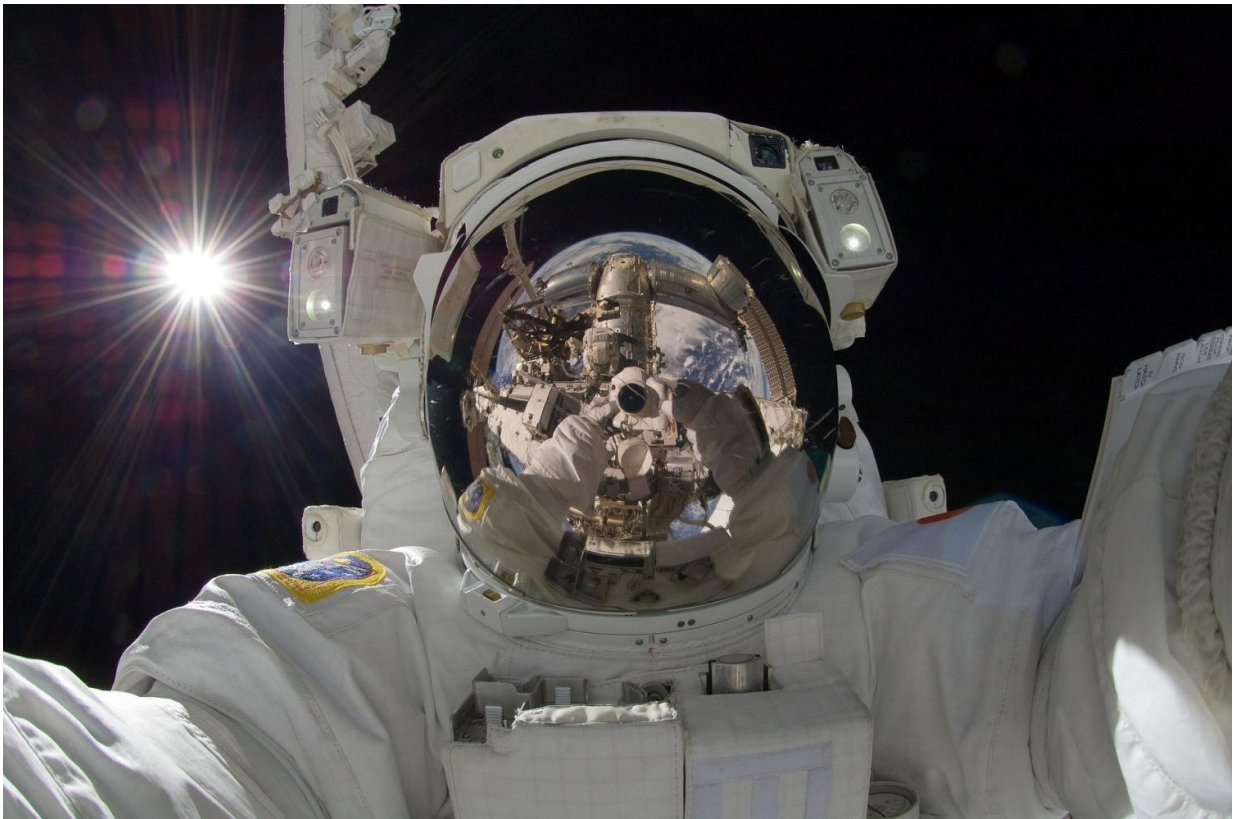


Jeff Bezos is still not an astronaut, according to the FAA

July 26 2021, by Josh Rivera, Usa Today



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Just because you were in space doesn't mean you get the wings of an astronaut.

The Federal Aviation Administration set new rules concerning the Commercial Space Astronaut Wings Program and the criteria used to award those commanding, piloting or working on privately funded spacecraft with the Commercial Space Astronaut Wings badge.

The order was issued on July 20, the same day billionaire and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and his Blue Origin rocket crew made history by blasting off from the West Texas desert, reaching [space](#) and returning to Earth.

NASA, the Air Force, the Federal Aviation Administration and some astrophysicists consider the boundary between the atmosphere and space to begin 50 miles up. Bezos actually met the requirement by going 62 miles above sea level.

To earn the wings, the FAA now states that passengers must have "demonstrated activities during flight that were essential to [public safety](#), or contributed to human space flight safety." Given the automation of Blue Origin, Bezos doesn't meet this criteria.

New Shepard, a 60-foot rocket and capsule, was designed primarily for space tourism thanks to fully automated flight systems, meaning nobody was piloting the craft nor contributing to "human space flight safety." After liftoff, the booster returned to the facility for a vertical landing while the capsule briefly floats in space, then touched down near the launch site with the help of parachutes.

The other passengers who joined Bezos on New Shepard—18-year-old Oliver Daemen, Bezos' brother, Mark, and "Mercury 13" aviator Wally Funk—also don't qualify as being members of the spacecraft's crew, since the FAA defines that as employees or contractor's associated with a company involved in the spacecraft's launch.

Blue Origin employs thousands across several states and campuses. Competitor Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic, who did his own space [flight](#) a week earlier than Bezos, has more than 800 employees.

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