

SpaceX crew launch bumped to next week; astronaut on mend

November 4 2021, by Marcia Dunn



The official portraits of astronauts, from left, Raja Chari, Kayla Barron, Matthias Maurer, of Germany, and Tom Marshburn, are displayed as a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket with the crew dragon capsule attached sits on Launch Pad 39-A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Friday, Oct. 29, 2021. On Thursday, Nov. 4, 2021, officials announced SpaceX's next astronaut flight is off until at least next week as more bad weather looms, and as flight surgeons continue to monitor the "minor medical issue" affecting one of the four astronauts. Credit: AP Photo/Chris O'Meara, File

SpaceX's next crew flight is off until at least next week, as NASA debates whether to bring astronauts back from the International Space Station before launching their replacements.

Flight surgeons, meanwhile, are continuing to monitor the "minor medical issue" affecting one of four astronauts awaiting liftoff at NASA's Kennedy Space Center.

NASA said Thursday that the astronaut—whom they're not identifying—should be fine before a possible launch attempt on Monday. But NASA may opt to first bring home the four astronauts living at the space station since April. The soonest they would return in their SpaceX capsule is Sunday; that would further postpone the next crew launch.

"The weather in November can be especially challenging, so our goal is to move forward on the plan with the highest probability of mission assurance and crew safety," NASA's commercial crew program manager, Steve Stich, said in a statement.

The U.S.-German crew should have rocketed to the [space station](#) last weekend, but [poor weather](#) along the [flight path](#) pushed the flight to Wednesday. But then one of the astronauts was sidelined for undisclosed medical reasons, and the launch was bumped to this weekend. But with more [bad weather](#) anticipated, SpaceX and NASA called it quits until next week.

NASA said managers will make a final decision soon on whether to prioritize the launch or splashdown, based on weather. They're also reviewing how many days would be needed between the two events.

Also factoring into the equation is the amount of time a SpaceX capsule can remain in orbit before its systems are degraded. The company's Dragon capsules are designed to spend 210 days aloft; the one up there now logged day 195 on Thursday. Additional analysis could extend the acceptable amount of time, according to NASA.

If the four astronauts come home first, the station will remain occupied by an American and two Russians.

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