

NASA hears signal from Voyager 2 spacecraft after mistakenly cutting contact

August 1 2023, by Marcia Dunn



In this Aug. 4, 1977, photo provided by NASA, the "Sounds of Earth" record is mounted on the Voyager 2 spacecraft in the Safe-1 Building at the Kennedy Space Center, Fla., prior to encapsulation in the protective shroud. After days of silence, NASA has heard from Voyager 2, more than 12 billion miles away in interstellar space. Flight controllers accidentally sent a wrong command nearly

two weeks ago that tilted the spacecraft's antenna away from Earth and severed contact. The project manager said Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023 that the fact that the Deep Space Network has picked up a "heartbeat signal" means the 46-year-old craft is alive and operating. Credit: AP Photo/NASA, File

After days of silence, NASA has heard from Voyager 2 in interstellar space billions of miles away.

Flight controllers accidentally sent a wrong command nearly two weeks ago that tilted the spacecraft's antenna away from Earth and severed contact.

[NASA's Deep Space Network](#), giant radio antennas across the globe, picked up a "heartbeat signal," meaning the 46-year-old craft is alive and operating, project manager Suzanne Dodd said in an email Tuesday.

The news "buoyed our spirits," Dodd said. Flight controllers at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California will now try to turn Voyager 2's antenna back toward Earth.

If the command doesn't work—and controllers doubt it will—they'll have to wait until October for an automatic spacecraft reset. The antenna is only 2% off-kilter.

"That is a long time to wait, so we'll try sending up commands several times" before then, Dodd said.

Voyager 2 rocketed into space in 1977, along with its identical twin Voyager 1, on a quest to explore the [outer planets](#).

Still communicating and working fine, Voyager 1 is now 15 billion miles

(24 billion kilometers) from Earth, making it the most distant spacecraft.

Voyager 2 trails its twin in [interstellar space](#) at more than 12 billion miles (19 billion kilometers) from Earth. At that [distance](#), it takes more than 18 hours for a signal to travel one way.

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