

Four new astronauts head to the International Space Station for a 6-month stay

March 4 2024, by Marcia Dunn



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon capsule with a crew of four on a mission to the International Space Station lifts off from pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, March 3, 2024. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux

Four astronauts headed to the International Space Station on Sunday where they will oversee the arrivals of two new rocketships during their half-year stint.

SpaceX's Falcon rocket blasted off from Kennedy Space Center, carrying NASA's Matthew Dominick, Michael Barratt and Jeanette Epps and Russia's Alexander Grebenkin.

The [astronauts](#) should reach the orbiting lab on Tuesday. They will replace a crew from the U.S., Denmark, Japan and Russia, who have been there since August.

"When are you getting here already?" space station commander Andreas Mogensen asked via X, formerly Twitter, after three days of delay due to high wind. SpaceX Launch Control termed it "fashionably late."

There was almost another postponement Sunday night. A small crack in the seal of the SpaceX capsule's hatch prompted a last-minute flurry of reviews, but it was deemed safe for the whole mission.

The new crew's six-month stay includes the arrival of two rocketships ordered by NASA. Boeing's new Starliner capsule with [test pilots](#) is due in late April. A month or two later, Sierra Space's Dream Chaser, a mini shuttle, should arrive. It is for delivering cargo to the station, but not passengers yet.



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Epps was originally assigned to fly Boeing's Starliner, which got bogged down with problems and stalled. NASA finally switched her to SpaceX.

"I am in a New York state of mind right now, it is amazing," she said upon reaching orbit, referring to the Billy Joel song.

Epps, who is from Syracuse, N.Y., is the second Black woman assigned to a long station mission. She said before the flight that she is especially proud to be a [role model](#) for Black girls, demonstrating that spaceflight

"is an option for them, that this is not just for other people."

An engineer, she worked for Ford Motor Co. and the CIA before becoming an astronaut in 2009. Epps should have launched to the space station on a Russian rocket in 2018, but was replaced for reasons never publicly disclosed.

Also new to space are Dominick, a Navy pilot, and Grebenkin, a former Russian military officer.



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon capsule with a crew of four on a mission to the International Space Station lifts off from pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, March 3, 2024. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon capsule with a crew of four on a mission to the International Space Station is seen during a time exposure as it lifts off from pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, March 3, 2024. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux



In this image taken from NASA video, commander Matthew Dominick, bottom right, and pilot Michael Barratt launch toward the International Space Station in a SpaceX capsule on Sunday, March 3, 2024, from Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. The crew of four will oversee the arrival of two new rocketships during their half-year stint. Credit: NASA via AP



Astronauts, from left, Russian cosmonaut Alexander Grebenkin, pilot Michael Barratt, commander Matthew Dominick, and mission specialist Jeanette Epps wave to the media as they leave the Operations and Checkout building for a trip to Launch Pad 39-A, Sunday, March 3, 2024, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts are scheduled to liftoff on a trip to the International Space Station. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux



Astronauts, front row from left, pilot Michael Barratt, commander Matthew Dominick, second row from left, Russian cosmonaut Alexander Grebenkin, and mission specialist Jeanette Epps leave the Operations and Checkout building for a trip to Launch Pad 39-A, Sunday, March 3, 2024, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts are scheduled to liftoff on a trip to the International Space Station. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux



Astronauts, from left, Russian cosmonaut Alexander Grebenkin, pilot Michael Barratt, commander Matthew Dominick, and mission specialist Jeanette Epps pose for a photo as they leave the Operations and Checkout building for a trip to Launch Pad 39-A, Sunday, March 3, 2024, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts are scheduled to liftoff on a trip to the International Space Station. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux



CREW-8

A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket sits on Launch Pad 39-A Friday, March 1, 2024, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts are set to lift off Saturday night on a mission to the International Space Station. Credit: AP Photo/Chris O'Meara



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket sits on Launch Pad 39-A Friday, March 1, 2024, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts are set to lift off Saturday night on a mission to the International Space Station. Credit: AP Photo/Chris O'Meara



Astronaut Matthew Dominick commander of the SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft speaks at a news conference at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, Feb. 25, 2024. The launch with the crew to the International Space Station is scheduled for early Friday. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket sits on Launch Pad 39-A, behind a large video photo of the crew, from left, Alexander Grebenkin, of Russia, Michael Barratt, Matthew Dominick, and Jeanette Epps, Friday, March 1, 2024, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts are set to lift off Saturday night on a mission to the International Space Station. Credit: AP Photo/Chris O'Meara



The SpaceX crew of the Dragon spacecraft, from left, cosmonaut Alexander Grebenkin, pilot Michael Barratt, commander Matthew Dominick and mission specialist Jeanette Epps gather for a photo after arriving at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, Feb. 25, 2024. The launch with the crew to the International Space Station is scheduled for early Friday. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux

Barratt, a doctor on his third mission, is the oldest full-time astronaut to fly in space. He turns 65 in April.

"It's kind of like a roller coaster ride with a bunch of really excited teenagers," Barratt said after reaching orbit. As for his age, he said before the flight, "As long as we stay healthy and fit and engaged, we're good to fly."

Flight controllers are monitoring a growing cabin leak on Russia's side of

the space station. The leak has doubled in size in the past few weeks and the area has been sealed off, NASA program manager Joel Montalbano said. He stressed there is no impact to station operations or crew safety.

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