

NASA: Cooling pump on space station shuts down

December 12 2013, by Seth Borenstein



This NASA photo obtained June 18, 2013 shows a view of Earth as seen from the Cupola on the Earth-facing side of the International Space Station.

NASA said Wednesday it was looking into a problem with a malfunctioning cooling pump on the International Space Station, but there was no immediate danger to the two American astronauts, three Russian cosmonauts, and Japanese astronaut on board.

A valve on a [pump](#) on one of the station's two external [cooling](#) loops shut down because it was too cool Wednesday afternoon, NASA spokesman Bob Jacobs said. He said that at no time was the crew at risk. But some non-critical equipment on the massive orbital outpost was powered down.

"It could be a serious problem, but it's not an emergency," Johnson Space Center spokesman Kelly Humphries said.

Engineers suspect a valve inside the pump was faulty and ground controllers moved electrical power supplies to the other cooling loop, Jacobs said. These loops circulate ammonia outside the station to keep equipment inside and outside cool.

"The station wasn't ever in any danger," Jacobs said.

Jacobs said the crew were preparing to go to bed as normal, while engineers on the ground tried to troubleshoot the problem. The faulty pump and cooling loop did start up again, he said.

Humphries said it was too early to speculate whether a spacewalk would be needed to fix the problem.

The station commander is cosmonaut Oleg Kotov. Americans Rick Mastracchio and Michael Hopkins, Russians Mikhail Tyurin and Sergey Ryazanaskiy, and Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata are aboard. The orbital outpost, the size of a football field and weighing nearly 1 million pounds (450,000), has been in orbit more than 220 miles (354 kilometers) above Earth since 1998.

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