Image: Recovery tests underway for NASA's Orion spacecraft

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Credit: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Gary Keen

A test version of NASA's Orion spacecraft floats inside the well deck of the U.S.S. Anchorage on Aug. 2, 2014, during recovery tests off the coast of California. A combined NASA and U.S. Navy team practiced recovery techniques over the weekend, in preparation for Orion's first trip to (and return from) space in Exploration Flight Test-1 (EFT-1) in December.

Orion is the exploration spacecraft designed to carry astronauts to destinations not yet explored by humans, including an asteroid and Mars. It will have emergency abort capability, sustain the crew during space travel and provide safe re-entry from deep space return velocities.

After traveling 3,600 miles into space on the uncrewed EFT-1, Orion will return to Earth at a speed of 20,000 miles per hour and endure temperatures near 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit before landing in the Pacific Ocean.

Provided by NASA