

NASA Evacuating International Space Station: 1st Time in Station's History

NASA on Thursday announced the first-ever medical evacuation of astronauts from the International Space Station

Four astronauts will come home more than a month early, according to NBC News.

Other than saying the situation with the affected astronaut is stable, NASA did not provide details about the issue or the individual affected.

"After discussions with Chief Health and Medical Officer Dr. JD Polk and leadership across the agency, I've come to the decision that it's in the best interest of our astronauts to return Crew-11 ahead of their planned departure," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said.

For the first time in the 25-year history of the International Space Station, we've had a serious enough medical emergency in space to bring a crew home early.

Big decision by @nasa leadership, with multiple domino impacts on operations, but I'm glad to see, as always, crew...

– Chris Hadfield (@Cmdr_Hadfield) January 8, 2026

The four individuals who will be returning within the next few days are NASA astronauts Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke, Japanese astronaut Kimiya Yui, and Russian cosmonaut Oleg Platonov.

"We have a very robust suite of medical hardware onboard the

International Space Station, but we don't have the complete amount of hardware that I would have in the emergency department, for example, to complete a workup of the patient," Polk said.

"And in this particular incident, the medical incident was sufficient enough that we were concerned about the astronaut that we would like to complete that workup," he said.

Polk said the lack of medical equipment on the space station "leaves that lingering risk and lingering question as to what that diagnosis is," according to The New York Times.

"That means there's some lingering risk for that astronaut on board. And so always, we err on the side of the astronaut's health and welfare," he said.



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On Wednesday, NASA canceled a planned spacewalk involving Cardman and Fincke, citing a medical issue, but without offering specifics.

Fincke is making his fourth space station trip; Yoi is making his second. Cardman and Platonov are on their first trip.

Some of the astronauts have been participating in research to determine the impacts of deep space travel on health.

As noted by CBS News, the four crew members rode a SpaceX Crew Dragon ferry ship to the space station on Aug. 1.

The crew was scheduled to return to Earth on Feb. 20.

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