

Cosmonauts, Like Moscow Residents, Hit by Bad Weather

March 14, 2013



Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, who took command of the international space station as the crew of two Russians and an American prepared to leave, juggling tomatoes from a recent "care package" that arrived from Earth.

As Moscow residents braved a third day of heavy snow Friday, the unusually wintry weather took a step out of this world when Russian Mission Control announced that two cosmonauts and a U.S. astronaut would end up stuck in space for at least an extra day.

The international space station trio — Oleg Novitskiy, Evgeny Tarelkin and Kevin Ford — had been scheduled to make the four-hour trip back to Earth on Friday morning. But freezing rain and fog at their landing site on the Kazakh steppes will delay their departure until Saturday.

"The weather is terrible, and we have decided not to risk it," a Mission Control official told the space crew in announcing the decision, Interfax reported.

The crew is now scheduled to touch down at 7:06 a.m. Saturday, Moscow time, with Mission Control intending to give a final green light to their trip late Friday or early Saturday.

The trio, who have lived aboard the international space station since October, will be replaced by a crew who will lift off from Kazakhstan's Baikonur Cosmodrome on March 29. In the meantime, the space station will be run by a skeletal crew led by Chris

Hadfield, who took charge Wednesday and is the first Canadian astronaut to command the station. The other two members of the team are Thomas Marshburn of the U.S. and Roman Romanenko of Russia.

Although improved weather might allow the astronauts to fly home Saturday, Moscow residents can only hope to see clearer weather conditions by Sunday, the federal weather bureau said. Freezing rain and occasionally heavy snowfall are forecast throughout the day Friday, with strong winds gusting up to 17 meters per second.

More snow is also predicted for Saturday before yielding to dry, cloudy weather on Sunday and ending a streak of the heaviest snowfall that Moscow has seen this late in March in 50 years. Weekend temperatures are expected to hover around zero degrees Celsius.

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