

NASA helps space crews breathe easier

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration successfully tested a new oxygen generating system aboard the International Space Station.

NASA said the system will allow the station's crew size to increase in 2009, augmenting the Russian Elektron oxygen generator.

With the increased capability to produce oxygen, NASA said the station can better support six crew members; the space station currently supports a three-person crew.

NASA said the system will generate about 12 pounds of oxygen per day -- enough for six people. However, it can provide as much as 20 pounds of oxygen daily -- enough for as many as 11 people.

"The successful activation and operation of this new system during its test run is an important step toward establishing a truly international space station," said Mike Suffredini, manager of NASA's space station program. "With this system's oxygen-generating capacity, we can expand the station's crew, providing more opportunities for our partner countries and unlocking more possibilities for research that will open new pathways for future exploration."

Currently, oxygen on the station comes from the Russian-built Elektron system, Russian supply vehicles, storage tanks in the U.S. Quest airlock and solid fuel oxygen generators.

Copyright 2007 by United Press International

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.