

September 2007

Vol. 27, Issue 9



From the Chair

I am sure all of you are just as saddened as I am in regards to the Scaled Composites accident that occurred July 26th in Mojave. The space community and SEDS will greatly miss the three men who lost their lives in the explosion. Our hearts go out to the Scaled family and we at SEDS offer them our support and sincerest condolences. Scaled Composites has put a special letter on their website. I would like to share part of it with you.

“We will never forget our fallen heroes. Wishing to pay tribute to them, webpages are being created to share memories of our friends. We will update these pages as more contribute stories and pictures. Further honors will follow as the legacy of SpaceShipTwo that they helped establish continues to take shape.

Now, when we look up, it won't be simply towards the black sky of space, but towards the dreams our friends held for the future.”

It is important to mourn those that were lost in this tragedy. However, I really think it is appropriate that Scaled Composites has chosen to reflect with an attitude of hope and pride. There will always be obstacles and burdens to overcome. Everyone in the space community is well aware of this. But we also know that you can't dream of flying without also contemplating the risk of falling. There is always a risk when you try something new. Getting past the fear of risks takes determination and courage. We call the men who were lost in this tragedy heroes because they were pursuing their dreams and inspiring others like us to take risks for the causes we believe in. Although I have never met any of these men in person, I am sure they were all passionate individuals who shared our vision for making space accessible to everyone. I am sure that they were men who cared deeply about the future of mankind and who wanted to contribute all that they could to protect the Earth we call home. Glen May, Todd Ivens and Eric Blackwell will be sorely missed by Scaled Composites, SEDS and everyone in the space community, but their dreams will live on as we continue in our endeavors and pursue our dreams in space.

If you would like to offer support in the form of a donation or send your wishes to the families of the victims, please visit <http://www.scaled.com/>.

Space News

NO EVIDENCE OF IMPROPER ALCOHOL USE BY ASTRONAUTS BEFORE SPACE FLIGHT, ACCORDING TO NASA

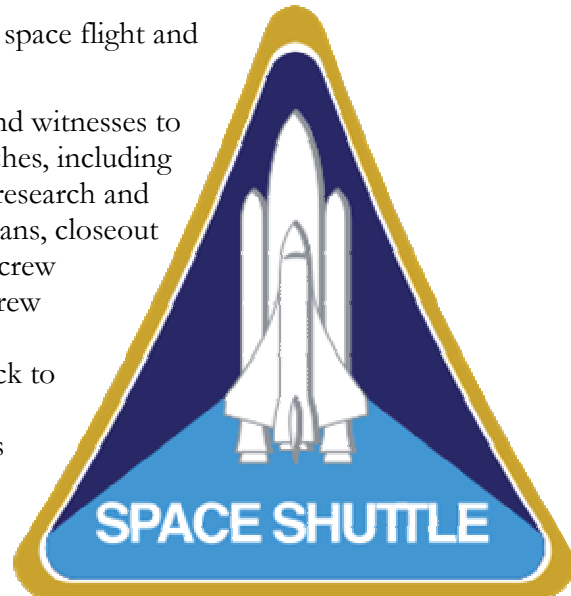
Science Daily — A NASA safety review released August 29 found no evidence to support claims that astronauts were impaired by alcohol when they flew in space.

NASA chief of Safety and Mission Assurance Bryan O'Connor conducted the month long review to evaluate allegations included in the Astronaut Health Care System Review Committee's report, which was released in late July.

"I have said many times during the past weeks that NASA takes these allegations very seriously -- just as we would any issues that could impact the safety of our missions," NASA Administrator Michael Griffin told a news conference at NASA Headquarters. "But at the same time, I also have said that the stories cited in the report seem improbable to those of us familiar with the astronauts' rigorous and very public activities during the hours leading up to a space flight."

O'Connor's review covered the past 20 years of space flight and includes:

- approximately 90 interviews with participants and witnesses to the last few days before shuttle and Soyuz launches, including current and former astronauts, flight surgeons, research and operations support nurses, shuttle suite technicians, closeout crew technicians and the managers and staff of crew quarters, including managers familiar with the crew quarters in Kazakhstan;
- a review of more than 40,000 records dating back to 1984, including mishap and close call reports, anonymous safety reports, safety hotline reports and disciplinary actions involving alcohol and drugs. These records cover 94 shuttle missions and 10 Soyuz missions;
- a review of relevant policies, procedures and near-launch timelines and staffing; and
- an inspection of crew quarters at Johnson Space Center in Houston and the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.



O'Connor interviewed almost 80 percent of active astronauts and all current operational flight surgeons. None of them corroborated allegations of preflight alcohol use or claims that management disregarded flight surgeon concerns about alcohol impairment and astronauts' fitness to fly.

"My review represents a good deal more investigation than normally would be done in response to an anonymous safety concern," O'Connor said. "As a result, I am confident there are enough safeguards in place to prevent an impaired crewmember from being strapped into a spacecraft."

NASA is moving forward with a wide range of improvements based on other recommendations from the Astronaut Health Care System Review Committee's report.

Continued on Next Page

Space News

Continued from Previous Page

Working with members of the astronaut corps, NASA is developing a formal astronaut code of conduct, or "Expected Astronaut Principles of Behavior," which will be a document that outlines expectations. The agency's medical managers also are studying how changes and initiatives advocated by the committee would fit into NASA health care procedures in a way that improves their effectiveness.

And NASA has accepted recommendations concerning the analysis and use of behavioral health data to improve astronaut selection criteria.

NASA will convene expert working groups to advise the agency on possible changes to its psychological testing. Additional training for flight surgeons in behavioral health assessments is planned, and evaluations will be added to annual flight physicals for all astronauts. Continuity of care in NASA clinics will be evaluated. The agency will ensure better clinical communication through regular meetings between behavioral health providers and flight surgeons.

In addition, NASA plans to improve procedures and instructions used in the administration of health care services for its behavioral health clinic. Briefings by flight surgeons to crewmembers are being re-emphasized to ensure astronauts fully understand the nature and purpose of all health-related testing and data collection. Senior NASA leaders also are holding meetings with flight surgeons and astronauts to ensure they understand the multiple pathways to communicate safety and health concerns.

To view O'Connor's report, along with a transcript and video of Wednesday's news conference, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov/audience/formedia/features/astronautreport.html>

From the Editor's Desk

Why space? Space is quite a dangerous place as has been demonstrated before on a few occasions. So why do we keep going? What drives us to reach for what is beyond the planet we live on? We know it is difficult, expensive, and dangerous to get there so why do we keep trying?

We keep pushing upward because we are human. We continue to reach for the stars just as our ancestors reached across the globe to discover and chart every corner of this pale blue dot. We are curious. We want to know what is up there. We want to experience it. We want to dream.

We are no different from prehistoric humans who followed the migrating animals to see where they went. We are no different from ancient humans who began building roads as far as the land allowed. We are no different from modern humans who sailed around the world to show they could. We are curious explorers; we want to discover; we want to see for ourselves.

This is why we keep reaching for the stars. We are human.

Conference Opportunities

1. MARS SOCIETY CONFERENCE

Date: August 30-September 2, 2007

Location: Los Angeles, CA (University of California)

Website: <http://www.marssociety.org/convention/2006/>

For Info: MarsSocInfo@aol.com

2. X-PRIZE CUP

Date: mid-October, 2007

Location: Las Cruces, New Mexico

Website: <http://www.xpcup.com/index.cfm>

For Info: (323) 957-0729

Discounts: Volunteer Opportunities Available
Volunteers get free admission

3. SEDS NATIONAL CONFERENCE SPACEVISION 2007

Date: November 9-12, 2007

Location: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Website: <http://spacevision.seds.org>

For Info: (704) 609-7416

4. SAIC: AIAA SPACE EXPLORATION CONFERENCE

Date: December 4-6, 2007

Location: Houston, TX

Website: <http://www.aiaa.org/content.cfm?pageid=230&lumeetingid=1487>

For Info: exploration@aiaa.org

E-MAIL RYAN MCLINKO AT MCLINKOR@MIT.EDU IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

Please send comments on the newsletter to publications@seds.org.

Students For the Exploration and Development of Space

