

Beat: Miscellaneous

SpaceX capsule returns to Earth after first cargo delivery flight

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USPA News - An unmanned Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) cargo capsule splashed down in the Pacific Ocean on Sunday after safely returning from the International Space Station (ISS), wrapping up NASA's first contracted cargo delivery flight. SpaceX CRS-1, an unmanned Dragon spacecraft, lifted off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida on October 7 to deliver a total of 882 pounds (400 kilograms) of supplies to the orbiting laboratory, including 260 pounds (117 kilograms) of crew supplies, 390 pounds (176 kilograms) of scientific research, 225 pounds (102 kilograms) of hardware and several pounds of other supplies.

The mission was the first of at least twelve cargo resupply missions to the space station by SpaceX under NASA's Commercial Resupply Services contract, which is worth approximately \$1.6 billion. SpaceX is one of two companies, the other being Orbital Sciences, which build and test new cargo spacecraft under a NASA program. The Dragon spacecraft was uninstalled from the ISS on early Sunday and released from the station's robotic arm at approximately 6:26 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT). The spacecraft returned safely at around 12:22 p.m. PDT when it splashed down into the Pacific Ocean, about 250 miles (402 kilometers) off the coast of southern California. "This historic mission signifies the restoration of America's ability to deliver and return critical space station cargo," said SpaceX CEO and Chief Technical Officer Elon Musk. "The reliability of SpaceX's technology and the strength of our partnership with NASA provide a strong foundation for future missions and achievements to come." As this marked the first time since the last space shuttle mission that NASA has been able to return research samples for analysis, the cargo capsule returned home with nearly twice as much cargo. It carried approximately 1,673 pounds (758 kilograms) of return cargo, including hardware, supplies, and a GLACIER freezer. The freezer is packed with research samples which were collected in the orbiting laboratory's unique microgravity environment. These samples will help advance multiple scientific disciplines on Earth and provide critical data on the effects of long-duration spaceflight on the human body. NASA Administrator Charles Bolden said the cargo delivery flight reminds that America's ingenuity is alive and well. "Just a little over one year after we retired the Space Shuttle, we have completed the first cargo resupply mission to the International Space Station," he said. "Not with a government owned and operated system, but rather with one built by a private firm -- an American company that is creating jobs and helping keep the U.S. the world leader in space as we transition to the next exciting chapter in exploration." After the capsule returned back to Earth, it was taken by boat to a port near Los Angeles, where it will be prepared for a return journey to SpaceX's test facility in McGregor, Texas, for processing. Some of the cargo, including the GLACIER freezer, will be removed at the port in California and returned to NASA within 48 hours.

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