

About Rocket Science

by L. Anne Emerson

If we use our best resources and spare no expense to train our superstar astronauts, as well as giving them the latest technological marvels to work with, we might want to value their health and their lives. (Er, High G's shake, rattle, and roll the brains of astronauts, athletes, the military, and stuntpeople. Not to mention "State Department employees" in enemy territory.) **If their employer does not help them, even if the financial rewards were enormous, their families might get a little cross.** (That's English-English for "annoyed." And THAT's British Understatement.) Meaning, we might NOT want to cut corners in designing rockets and experiments. And we might NOT want to stick to a planned schedule if it isn't safe to do so. And we might NOT want to send people up who have trained hard, want the honor, but are unfit. They tell lies to pass the test, say. Or, they fool the polygraph.

But you actually need to be able to do what's on the test, if you are going up, up and away on the top of a hydrogen bomb. (That's called "liquid hydrogen" when it's rocket fuel, so most of us wouldn't know the difference.) Someone sells astronauts the "honor and glory" business, and their families live with the consequences. And if you are a liar, you CAN be blackmailed, even if you weren't a national security risk to begin with. (Don't ask, "What?" It has slip-slided away.)

Some of us remember the Challenger Disaster. Lesson learned – Space pioneering is dangerous. According to Wikipedia: *On January 28, 1986, Space Shuttle Challenger **broke apart 73 seconds into its flight**, killing all seven crew members. The spacecraft disintegrated about 46,000 ... Or: On February 1, 2003, the [Space Shuttle Columbia](#) disintegrated during atmospheric re-entry over Texas and Louisiana, killing all seven crew members...* If that was in the news, my family has kept it from me. Here are more snippets about recent space adventures:

*NTD News says: NASA has identified Mike Fincke as the Crew-11 astronaut who recently experienced a medical issue aboard the International Space Station. Fincke launched with three others on a SpaceX flight last summer. Their mission came to an early end on **Jan. 15**, a week after he experienced what he called a "medical event that required immediate attention"...*

*From NASA: NASA's [Artemis II](#) successfully launched on **April 1, 2026**, at 6:35 p.m. EDT from Launch Complex 39B at the [Kennedy Space Center](#) in Florida. It carried four astronauts on a historic 10-day lunar flyby, marking the first crewed mission to travel beyond low Earth orbit since 1972. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)] I (Annie) understood from media sources that one crew member was taken away with medical issues after a safe landing. Yesterday, I watched a video of the Artemis II Crew handing the baton of space travel over to the Artemis III crew. There were only THREE Artemis II crew members in the video; no mention of the fourth, let alone why he was absent.*

*AI Overview: **Blue Origin New Glenn (May 28, 2026):** A 320-foot tall New Glenn rocket suffered a fiery explosion during an overnight static fire engine test at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station Launch Complex 36, heavily damaging the pad. No one was on board. AI Overview: ...The total development cost for the entire New Glenn program is estimated at **\$2.5 billion**, with over **\$1 billion** invested separately into upgrading Launch Complex 36 at Cape Canaveral, which suffered heavy damage during the static-fire test explosion on May 28, 2026.*