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Humans To Team Up With Robots On Space Exploration



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Reporting

(CBS 5) NASA wants to put astronauts on the moon again by 2018. To do that, it may need some help from robots.

Scientists are developing robots that act like people. NASA Ames Intern Andrew Ring has been helping NASA demonstrate how to use robots to explore the moon, and perhaps even Mars.

"This is a coordinated team," says researcher Alonzo Vera who is part of a group of robots and humans living together. "Sometimes they're working independently, and sometimes they're working together."

Astronauts use voice command to control the robots, and guide them through exploration. The robots send back confirmation of their commands before going into action.

NASA plans to send a team of robots and people to the moon in 2018, and then later to Mars. Mars already has two robots, the rovers Spirit and Opportunity continue to explore the surface many months beyond their projected lifespan.

The new generation of rovers at Ames would leave their Martian cousins in the dust. The new models move at about the same speed, but they work much faster by linking different jobs with one command.

"On Mars right now it takes rovers four days to get up to a rock because it has to be done very carefully so the instruments are not damaged. But the technology is advancing," Vera says.

Every year, the robots get smarter. By next year, scientists hope to have the machines move a little faster, and recognize many more words. In five years, the goal is to have machines and humans talking and working together like

human co-workers.

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