Before a Soyuz launch Thursday someone forgot to secure a 20-ton service platform



A Soyuz rocket launched on Thursday carrying Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergei Kud-Sverchkov and Sergei Mikayev, as well as NASA astronaut Christopher Williams, for an eight-month mission to the International Space Station. The trio of astronauts arrived at the orbiting laboratory without incident.

However, on the ground, there was a serious problem during the launch with the ground systems that support processing of the vehicle before liftoff at Site 31, located at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

In a terse statement issued Thursday night on the social media site Telegram, the Russian space corporation that operates Soyuz appeared to downplay the incident: “The launch pad was

inspected, as is done every time a rocket is launched. Damage to several launch pad components was identified. Damage can occur after launch, so such inspections are mandatory worldwide. The launch pad’s condition is currently being assessed.”

‘Significant’ damage

However video imagery of the launch site after liftoff showed substantial damage, with a large service platform appearing to have fallen into the flame trench below the launch table. According to one source, this is a platform located beneath the rocket, where workers can access the vehicle before liftoff. It has a mass of about 20 metric tons and was apparently not secured prior to launch, and the thrust of the vehicle ejected it into the flame trench. “There is significant damage to the pad,” said this source.

Russia has plenty of launch pads, both in Russia and neighboring countries, including Kazakhstan, that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. However, Site 31 at Baikonur is the country’s only pad presently configured to handle launches of the Soyuz rocket and two spacecraft critical to the space station, the cargo-only Progress vehicle and the Soyuz crew capsule.

https://arstechnica.com/space/2025/11/russian-launch-pad-incident-raises-concerns-about-future-of-space-station/