FACTS & FIGURES

ISS: Four Years And Still Growing

(NAPSA)—Imagine driving your car backward at 200 miles per hour and trying to match tailpipes with the car in front of you. Think you could do it? That's how docking a spacecraft to the International Space Station (ISS) has been described. Yet it has successfully been done more than 30 times.

The Space Station has just turned four years old and the dockings have been vital to its mission. They provide much-needed components for the continued building of the station as well as experiments.

The station has been permanently occupied for two years now. NASA says one of the main benefits is what the station can teach us about life on Earth. Astronauts on the ISS are not only pilots and explorers, they're scientists as well. Crews have already conducted more than 65 scientific experiments including a wide variety of experiments in human life and physical sciences, commercial space product development, Earth observation, as well as education and technology demonstrations. Many of those were carried over into subsequent expeditions, that have now returned home for further study.

Over the past 2 years, 19 separate missions to the International Space Station have been completed—that's almost one per month.

Currently, the ISS weighs about 335,000 pounds (about the same as 110 automobiles) and is roughly the size of a three-bedroom house. ISS is a work in progress though,

The International Space Station weighs about as much as 110 cars and will be roughly the size of a five-bedroom house.

and when it is completed it will have the inside space of a five-bedroom home. Outside, its structural beams and arrays will be larger than two football fields.

So how do they keep something the size of a large house hurtling through space? With a lot of help. The ISS travels the equivalent distance of a flight from Earth to the moon and back in one day. To achieve this and keep everything running smoothly, ISS works with over 100,000 people in space agencies and at 500 contractor facilities in 37 states and 16 countries—that's equivalent to almost half the population of North Dakota.

Eventually, 110 kilowatts of power will be available on the ISS supplied by an acre of solar panels. That means the ISS will have five times more power available than any past space station, enabling continued unprecedented research.

For more information, visit http://spaceflight.nasa.gov.