

Russell R. Romanella

Former Director of Safety and Mission Assurance

Russell R. Romanella was the director of Safety and Mission Assurance at NASA's John F. Kennedy Space Center in Florida. He retired in January 2014. The Safety and Mission Assurance (S&MA) Directorate is Kennedy's focal point for planning and execution of center and program S&MA activities at Kennedy. The directorate provides the primary interface function with the S&MA offices of NASA Headquarters, other centers, other government agencies, international governments and private industry. The primary purpose of Kennedy's S&MA is to ensure operations at Kennedy-responsible sites are conducted in a manner which will achieve mission safety and success. S&MA consists of the safety, reliability, maintainability, software assurance and quality disciplines which are applied to reduce the probability of mishaps, failures, maintenance burden and product flaws.

Romanella joined NASA in 1981 as a co-op student while attending Florida State University. After graduation, in 1984, he joined NASA as an operations engineer in the Space Shuttle Processing Directorate. Romanella became project manager for the Payload Data Management System in 1990, responsible for the design, development, management and operations of this information system, which supported all payload processing including space station, shuttle and expendable launch vehicle payloads.

In 1996, he moved to the Space Station Hardware Integration Office as chief of the Integration Operations Office. In 1997, he became element manager for International Space Station, or ISS, missions including those flying the multi-purpose logistics modules and the Canadian robotic arm. He supported the acceptance of these critical space station elements in both Italy and Canada and managed their processing activities while at Kennedy.

In September 2003, Romanella became deputy director of the International Space Station and Spacecraft Processing Directorate, and in November 2005, he became director of the same directorate. In this position, Romanella was responsible for all ground processing of space station elements from around the world getting ready to fly in the space shuttle. While in these positions, critical elements of the ISS were successfully assembled at Kennedy, tested, and launched to orbit. These critical space station elements included the ISS connecting nodes, the U.S. Laboratory, large solar arrays, airlock, and international partner elements, such as the Columbus European laboratory, the Japanese Logistics Module and the Canadian robotic system. These elements are now operating on orbit and supporting the largest, most complex space station in human history. In addition, Romanella was responsible for preparing the Kennedy Space Center for final assembly of a future human space launch vehicle: the Orion crew exploration vehicle.

Romanella received numerous achievement and performance awards including NASA's Exceptional Service Medal, the Center Director Award, and the Presidential Rank Award for his leadership in preparing space station elements for launch from the Kennedy Space Center.

Born in Miami, Fla., he graduated in 1976 from Southwest Miami High School. He received a Bachelor of Science in mathematics and computer science in 1984 from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Fla.