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Moon impact

■ While the US and China are preparing for a new era of lunar exploration, a new study by the American Geophysical Union suggests that every Moon landing could leave behind more than just footprints. Methane released in spacecraft exhaust may spread across the moon surprisingly quickly, potentially contaminating regions that could preserve ancient chemical clues about how life first emerged on Earth. Even a landing near the moon's South Pole could send methane molecules "hopping" across the lunar surface to the North Pole in less than two lunar days.