

African dust cloud heads for Florida

July 24 2005

Florida and the Caribbean are likely to get a taste of the Sahara Desert next week. An enormous dust cloud is moving across the Atlantic Ocean, borne by the trade winds, the Miami Herald reports.

"This is not going to be a tremendous event, but it will be kind of interesting," Jim Lushine, a severe weather expert with the National Weather Service in Miami, told the newspaper.

The dust cloud is about 2,500 miles by 1,500 miles -- or, as Lushine described it, about the size of the continental United States. When it hits, Florida is likely to have a hazy day followed by a brilliant sunset.

The terrestrial effects are likely to be limited, since most of the dust will be in the upper atmosphere. People with respiratory problems are advised to stay indoors as much as possible when the dust hits.

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