

# Huge asteroid hurtles toward Earth

June 29 2006

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An asteroid that's about one-half-mile wide is hurtling toward Earth, expected to narrowly miss the planet early Monday.

Astronomers say the space rock, called 2004 XP14, will pass "exceptionally close" to Earth in astronomical terms -- 268,624 miles away at its closest approach, The Scotsman reported. That's a little more than the moon's average distance from Earth.

The asteroid, discovered in December 2004, at first produced concerns that it could hit Earth later in the century but subsequent studies ruled out such a collision.

However, 2004 XP14 has been classified as a Potentially Hazardous Asteroid, or PHA, by the Minor Planet Center in Cambridge, Mass., because of the proximity of its orbit to Earth and its estimated size, The Scotsman said.

Astronomers have a list of 783 PHAs.

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