

# Big asteroid to make close, harmless zip by Earth

November 8 2011

---

An asteroid the size of an aircraft carrier is set to make a close but harmless swing by Earth on Tuesday.

Scientists at NASA's Near-Earth Object Program, which tracks asteroids and comets, ruled out any chance of impact. They're using the close encounter to learn more about the [space rock](#) known as 2005 YU55.

The last time a cosmic interloper this size came this close to Earth was in 1976 and it won't happen again until 2028.

Since late last week, antennas at the space agency's [Deep Space Network](#) in California have been monitoring the quarter-mile-wide asteroid as it approaches from the direction of the sun.

The [Arecibo Observatory](#) in Puerto Rico planned a viewing Tuesday when the asteroid is set to make its closest pass at a distance of 202,000 miles at 6:28 p.m. EST.

Researchers will analyze [radar images](#) to glean details about the asteroid's surface features and shape.

Since its discovery six years ago by a University of Arizona astronomer, scientists have learned a great deal about 2005 YU55. Its surface is coal black, and it spins slowly through space.

Amateur skygazers who want a glimpse need two things: a good sky

chart and a 6-inch telescope or larger since the asteroid is too faint to detect with the naked eye. Even with a telescope, sighting is not guaranteed. The glare from the moon may make the asteroid difficult to spot.

**More information:** NASA's Near-Earth Object Program:  
<http://neo.jpl.nasa.gov>

©2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Big asteroid to make close, harmless zip by Earth (2011, November 8) retrieved 13 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-11-big-asteroid-harmless-earth.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.