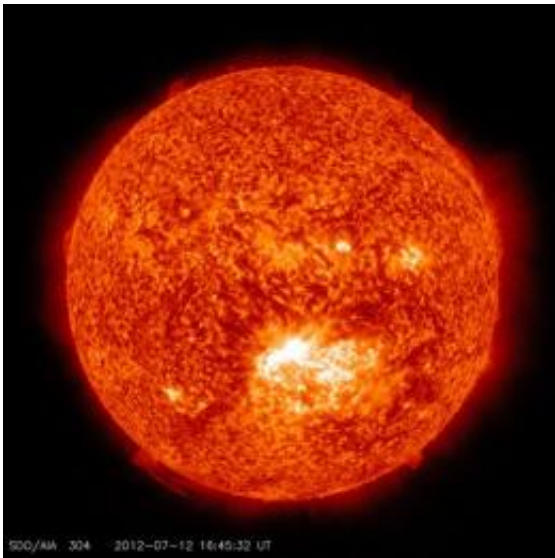


Solar storm barreling toward Earth this weekend

July 13 2012, by ALICIA CHANG



This image captured in the 304 Angstrom wavelength, which is typically colorized in red provided by NASA shows a solar flare, lower center, erupting from the sun on Thursday, July 12, 2012. Space weather scientists said there should be little impact to Earth. The flare erupted from a region which rotated into view on July 6, 2012. (AP Photo/NASA)

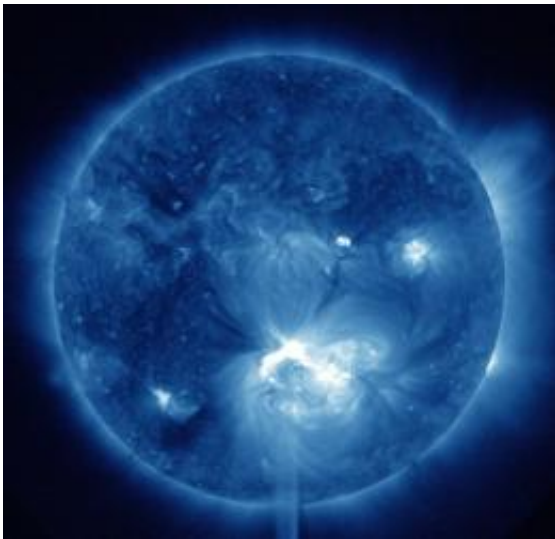
(AP) — A solar storm was due to arrive Saturday morning and last through Sunday, slamming into Earth's magnetic field. Scientists said it will be a minor event, and they have notified power grid operators, airlines and other potentially affected parties.

"We don't see any ill effects to any systems," said forecaster Joe

Kunches at the U.S. [Space Weather](#) Prediction Center in Colorado.

There's a bright side to stormy space weather: It tends to spawn colorful northern lights as the charged particles bombard Earth's outer magnetic field. Shimmering auroras may be visible at the United States-Canada border and northern Europe this weekend, Kunches said.

The storm began Thursday when the sun unleashed a massive flare that hurled a cloud of highly charged particles racing toward Earth at 3 million mph (4.8 million kph). It was the sixth time this year that such a powerful solar outburst has occurred. None of the previous storms caused major problems.



This false-color image provided by NASA shows a solar flare, lower center, erupting from the sun on Thursday, July 12, 2012. Space weather scientists said there should be little impact to Earth. The flare erupted from a region which rotated into view on July 6, 2012. (AP Photo/NASA)

In severe cases, solar storms can cause power blackouts, damage

satellites and disrupt GPS signals and high-frequency radio communications. Airlines are sometimes forced to reroute flights to avoid the extra radiation around the north and south poles.

In 1989, a strong [solar storm](#) knocked out the power grid in Quebec, causing 6 million people to lose electricity.

Juha-Pekka Luntama, a space weather expert at the European Space Agency, said utility and navigation operators "will certainly see something, but they will probably find ways to deal with any problems."

The storm is part of the sun's normal 11-year cycle of solar activity, which is supposed to reach peak storminess next year.

Copyright 2012 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Solar storm barreling toward Earth this weekend (2012, July 13) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-07-solar-storm-barreling-earth-weekend.html>

<p>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.</p>
--