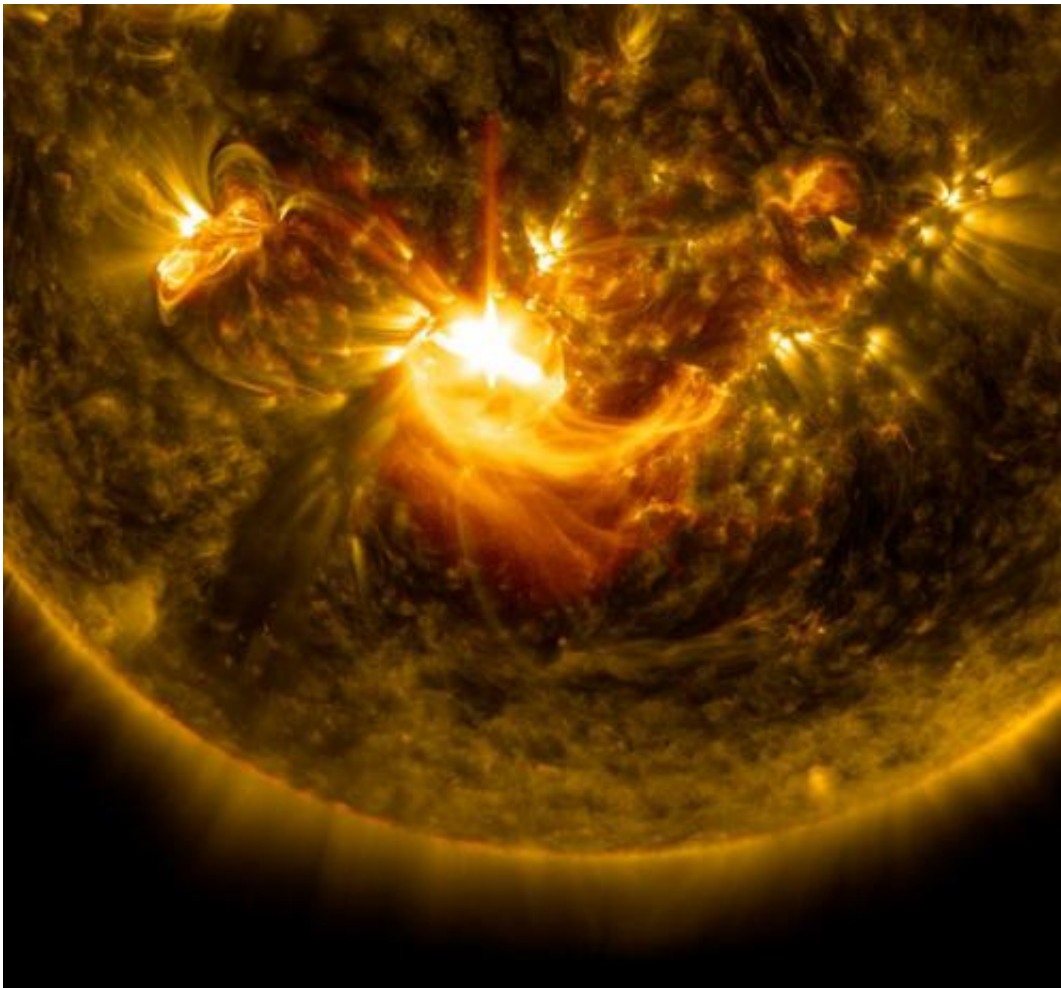


NASA's sun watching observatory sees mid-level solar flare on Dec. 16, 2014

December 17 2014



NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory captured this image of a mid-level solar flare -- as seen in the bright flash in the middle -- on Dec. 16, 2014 shortly before midnight EST. Credit: NASA/SDO

The sun emitted a mid-level solar flare, peaking at 11:50 p.m. EST on Dec. 16, 2014. NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory, which watches the sun constantly, captured an image of the event. Solar flares are powerful bursts of radiation. Harmful radiation from a flare cannot pass through Earth's atmosphere to physically affect humans on the ground, however—when intense enough—they can disturb the atmosphere in the layer where GPS and communications signals travel.

This flare is classified as an M8.7-class flare. M-class flares are a tenth the size of the most intense flares, the X-class flares. The number provides more information about its strength. An M2 is twice as intense as an M1, an M3 is three times as intense, etc.

To see how this event may affect Earth, please visit NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center at <http://spaceweather.gov>, the U.S. government's official source for space weather forecasts, alerts, watches and warnings.

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

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