

# There's only a 1 in 7000 chance an asteroid will hit the Earth in September

June 10 2019, by Evan Gough

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There are tons of asteroids and comets out there. Imagine seeing this one barreling down on us. Artist's impression of the dead comet 2015 TB145, otherwise known as the "Death Comet" because of its appearance. Credit: José Antonio Peñas/SINC

Whenever scientists announce an upcoming close encounter with an asteroid, certain corners of the internet light up like the synaptic rush that accompanies a meth binge, with panicky headlines shouted straight from the brain stem. But never mind that. We're not that corner of the internet. We're sober, yo!

The fact of the matter is, there aren't any more near-Earth asteroids than there used to be. We're just getting good at detecting them.

The latest one is called [2006QV89](#) (we're going to call it QV for short), and it's a football field-sized chunk of rock. But don't let that frighten you, it's really only 40 meters in diameter (48.5 meters wide x 109 meters long). Some are feeling panicky,—or they couldn't care less, but want you to panic for clicks. Part of the problem is that the ESA has put it on their [risk list](#), which sounds ominous.

All the risk list really means is that the rock has a non-zero chance of striking Earth. It doesn't mean it's really big, or that it would threaten civilization if it did collide with us. It just means they've taken notice of it and are watching it with one of the many telescopes capable of keeping an eye on it. No plans to fly into space and make it go boom.

According to the ESA, QV has a 1 in 7,299 chance of striking Earth. That's nowhere near the one in 100 threshold that requires action. In fact, here's how insignificant this [asteroid](#) is: There are over 850 other asteroids on the risk list, and some of them are near a kilometer in diameter. (The Chicxulub dinosaur-killer was somewhere between 11 km and 81 km in diameter.)



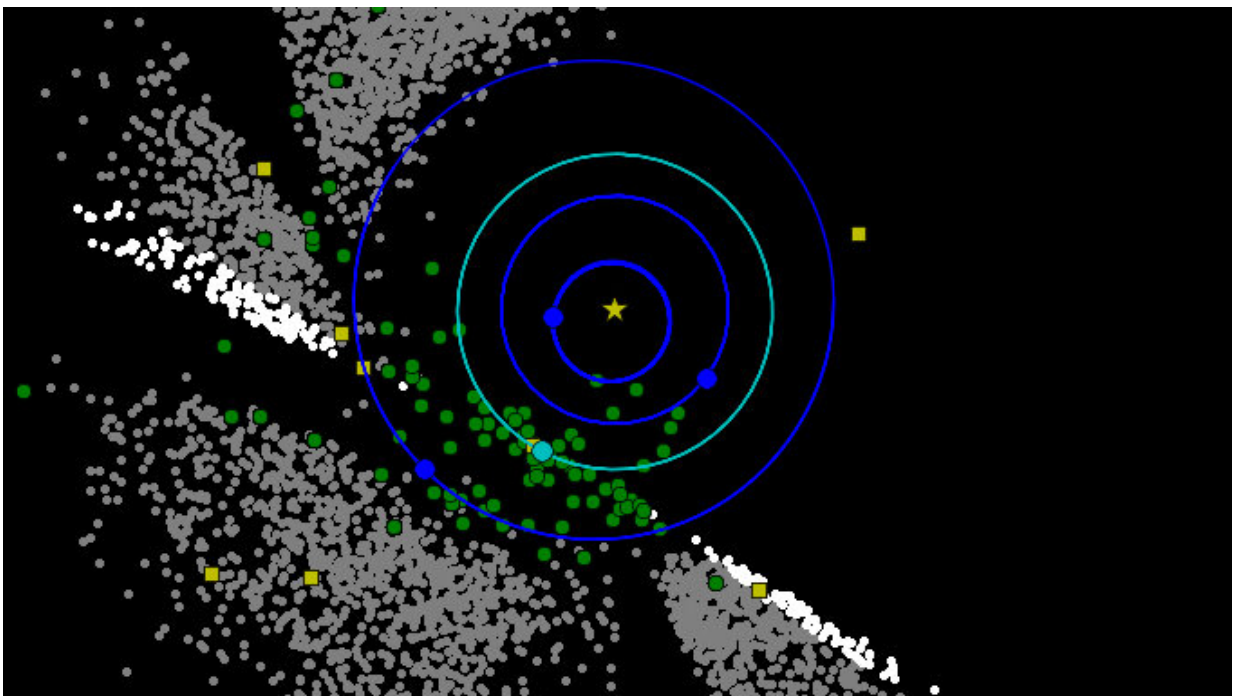
Can't write an asteroid article without an image of the Big Daddy of all asteroids. Here's an artistic rendition of the Chicxulub impactor striking ancient Earth, with Pterosaur observing. Credit: NASA

QV is also over 6.7 million km (4.2 million miles) away from Earth, and won't be at its [closest approach](#) until September, according to the ESA. There's lots of time to dig a big hole in your yard and fill it with guns, ammo, and food.

Seriously though, this one's nothing to worry about. NASA and the ESA and other space-smart countries are always keeping an eye on the skies

and cataloging all the near-Earth objects (NEOs) just in case one comes for us. We keep hearing about them because we're so good at spotting them. Eventually, we'll stop reporting every one of them. But the risk is that certain other dark corners of the internet will scream conspiracy.

If you're still worried, or know someone who is, keep something in mind. Sure, the ESA keeps a risk list of asteroids, and sure, there are over 850 asteroids on that list, including the soon to be forgotten 2006QV89. But they also have another list: the [priority list](#). It's basically a list that classifies objects needing follow up. The priority list itself has four subcategories: low priority, useful, necessary, and at the top, urgent.



It's kind of crowded out there in space, but it's nothing to worry about. This graphic shows asteroids and comets observed by NASA's Near-Earth Object Wide-field Survey Explorer (NEOWISE) mission. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/UCLA/JHU

"Urgent Priority Follow-Up Asteroid Approaching Earth!"

If you ever see that headline, then you can freak out.

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