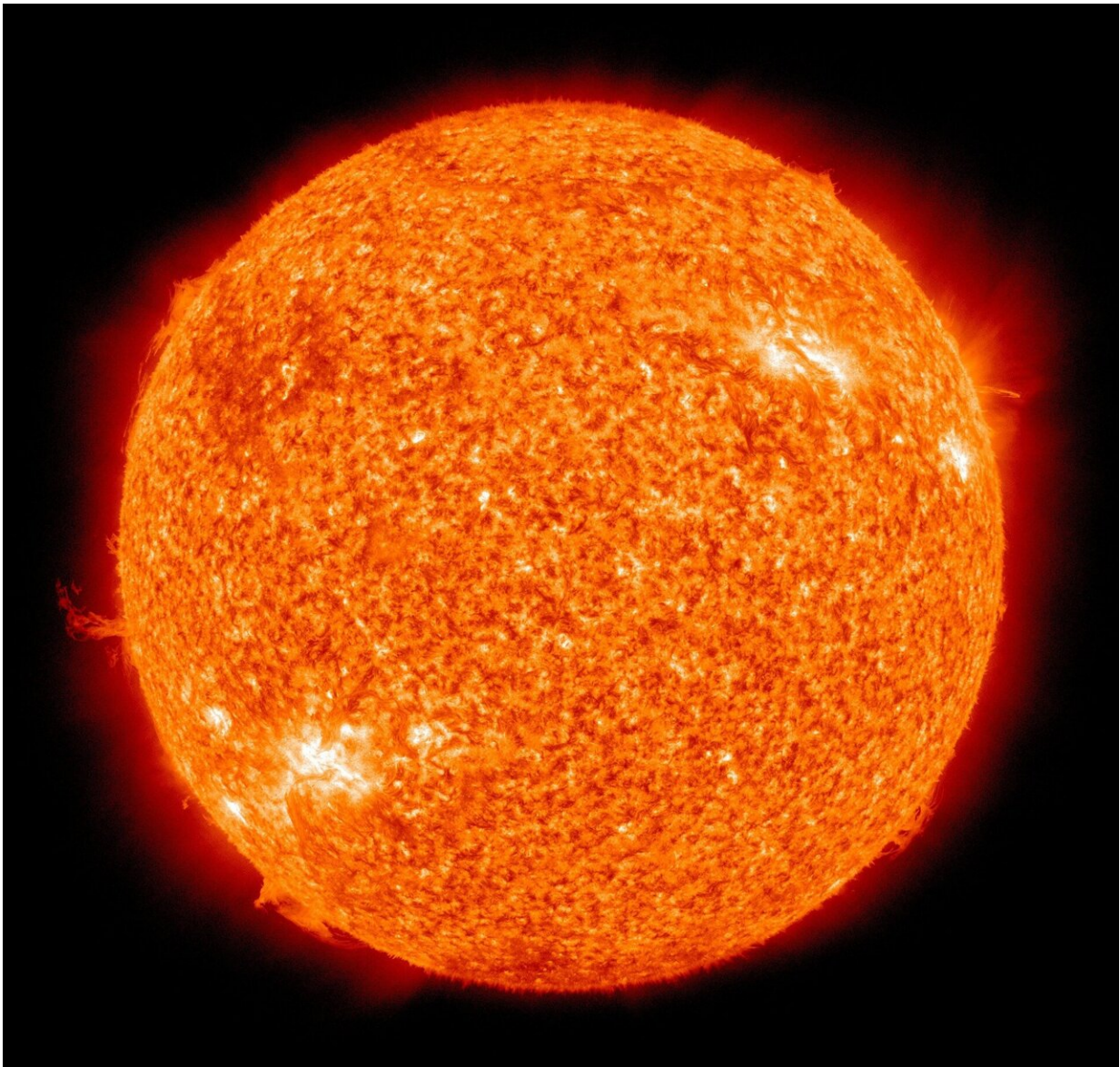


NASA's Parker Solar Probe completes 18th close approach to the sun

January 8 2024, by Michael Buckley



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NASA's Parker Solar Probe completed its 18th close approach to the sun on Dec. 28, 2023, matching its own distance record by skimming just about 4.51 million miles (7.26 million kilometers) from the solar surface.

The [close approach](#) (known as perihelion) occurred at 7:56 p.m. EST, with Parker Solar Probe traveling at 394,736 miles per hour (635,266 kilometers per hour) around the sun—also matching the speed record for the 17th solar encounter. The milestone also marked the midway point in the mission's 18th solar encounter, which began Dec. 24, 2023, and continued through Jan. 2, 2024.

The spacecraft entered the encounter in good health, with all systems operating normally. Parker Solar Probe checked back in with mission operators at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland—where the spacecraft was also designed and built—by sending a status beacon tone on Jan. 5.

Provided by NASA

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