

Old European satellite plunges harmlessly through the atmosphere over the Pacific

February 22 2024, by Marcia Dunn



This photo provided by the European Space Agency shows the European Remote Sensing 2 satellite (ERS-2) satellite in a clean room before its launch in 1995. The Earth-observing satellite fell out of orbit Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024, and harmlessly broke apart over the Pacific. Credit: ESA via AP

An old Earth-observing satellite fell out of orbit Wednesday and harmlessly broke apart over the Pacific.

The European Remote Sensing 2 [satellite](#) reentered halfway between Hawaii and Alaska. The European Space Agency confirmed the demise of the 5,000-pound (2,300-kilogram) [spacecraft](#), known as ERS-2.

No damage or injuries were reported. Experts had expected most of the satellite to burn up.

Launched in 1995, the spacecraft was retired in 2011. Flight controllers quickly lowered its orbit to avoid hitting other satellites, using up all the fuel, and natural orbital decay took care of the rest. Its entry was uncontrolled, and so the precise location could not be predicted.

"Gone, but not forgotten," ESA said on X, formerly Twitter. "ERS-2 left a remarkable legacy of data that still continue to advance science."

Its predecessor, ERS-1, which failed and stopped working decades ago, remains in orbit.

© 2024 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Old European satellite plunges harmlessly through the atmosphere over the Pacific (2024, February 22) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-02-european-satellite-plunges-harmlessly-atmosphere.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.