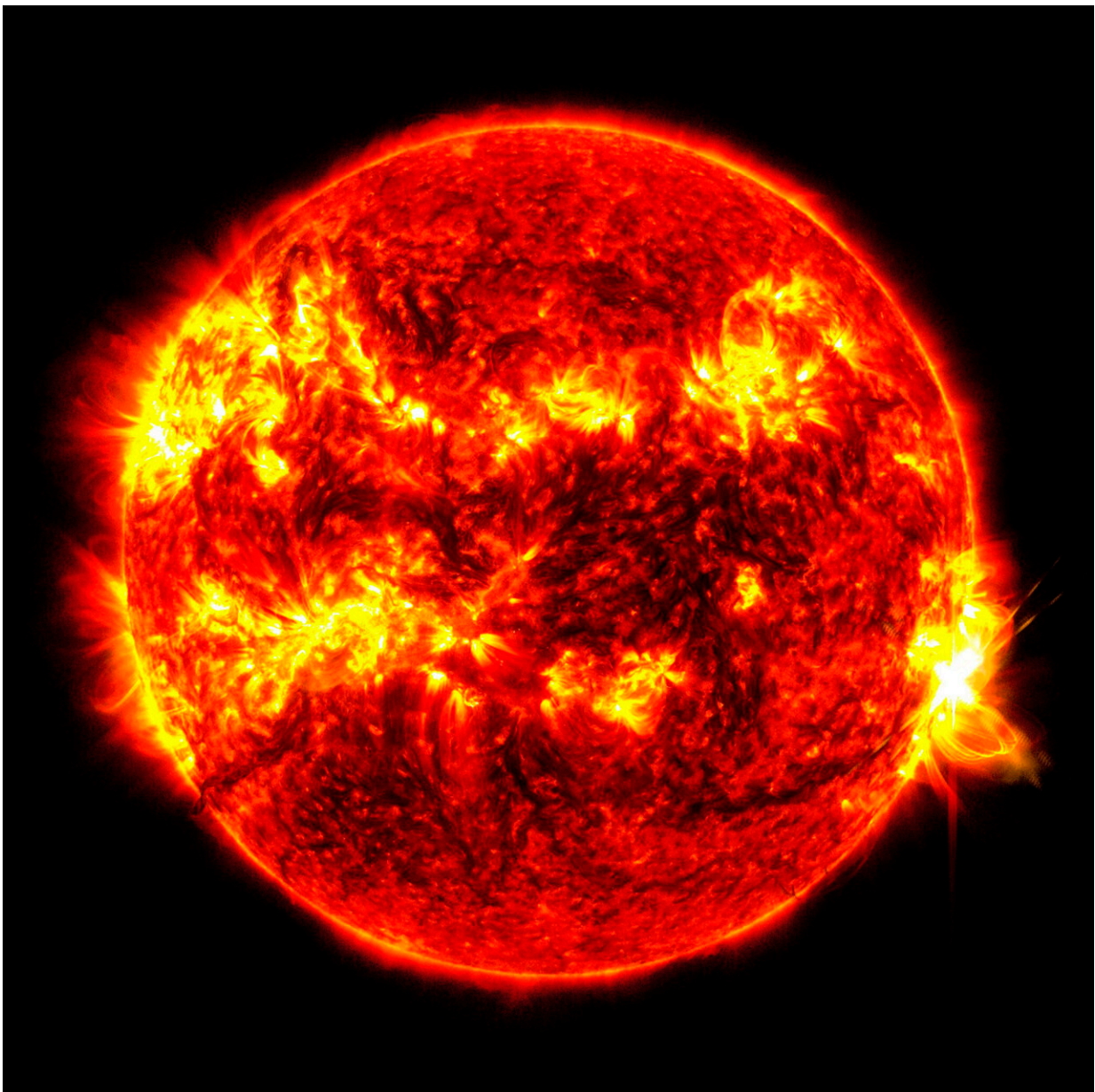


Sun shoots out biggest solar flare in almost 2 decades, but Earth should be out of the way this time

May 15 2024, by Marcia Dunn



This image provided by NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory shows a solar flare, the bright flash at right, on Tuesday, May 14, 2024. The sun produced its biggest flare in nearly a decade Tuesday, just days after a severe solar storm pummeled Earth and created dazzling northern lights in unaccustomed places. Credit: NASA/SDO via AP

The sun produced its biggest flare in nearly two decades Tuesday, just days after severe solar storms pummeled Earth and created dazzling northern lights in unaccustomed places.

"Not done yet!" the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced in an update.

It's the biggest flare of this 11-year [solar cycle](#), which is approaching its peak, according to NOAA. The good news is that Earth should be out of the line of fire this time because the flare erupted on a part of the sun rotating away from Earth.

NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory captured the bright flash of the X-ray flare. It was the strongest since 2005, rated on the scale for these flares as X8.7.

Bryan Brasher at NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center in Boulder, Colorado said it may turn out to have been even stronger when scientists gather data from other sources.

It follows nearly a week of flares and mass ejections of coronal plasma that threatened to disrupt power and communications on Earth and in orbit. An ejection associated with Tuesday's [flare](#) appeared to have been

directed away from our planet, although analysis is ongoing, Brasher noted.

NASA said the weekend geomagnetic storm caused one of its environmental satellites to rotate unexpectedly because of reduced altitude from the space weather, and go into a protective hibernation known as safe mode. And at the International Space Station, the seven astronauts were advised to stay in areas with strong radiation shielding. The crew was never in any danger, according to NASA.

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