Faint auroras may be visible in Northern Hemisphere skies after weekend solar storms

August 12 2024, by Adithi Ramakrishnan

The northern lights, or the aurora borealis, appear in the sky over Rat Lake in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories on Thursday, Aug.8, 2024. Credit: Bill Braden /The Canadian Press via AP

Solar storms persisting from the weekend may produce faint colorful
auroras across the Northern Hemisphere, with little disruption to power and communications, space forecasters said Monday.

The sun has shot out at least five strong solar flares since Saturday containing clouds of high-energy plasma that can interfere with power grids and scramble GPS signals, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. But no major communication problems have been reported so far, said NOAA spokesperson Erica Grow Cei.

Unusually strong solar storms in May produced jaw-dropping aurora displays across the Northern Hemisphere. Grow Cei said this event that produced light shows over the weekend will likely be shorter, but may still produce faint auroras as far south in the U.S. as Alabama and Northern California on Monday night.

The sun’s magnetic field is currently at the peak of its 11-year cycle, making storms and aurora displays more frequent.

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