

# Massive solar storm to hit Earth in 2012 with 'force of 100m bombs' ANI

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Melbourne, Aug 26 (ANI): Astronomers are predicting that a massive solar storm, much bigger in potential than the one that caused spectacular light shows on Earth earlier this month, is to strike our planet in 2012 with a force of 100 million hydrogen bombs.

Several US media outlets have reported that NASA was warning the massive flare this month was just a precursor to a massive solar storm building that had the potential to wipe out the entire planet's power grid.

Despite its rebuttal, NASA's been watching out for this storm since 2006 and reports from the US this week claim the storms could hit on that most Hollywood of disaster dates - 2012.

Similar storms back in 1859 and 1921 caused worldwide chaos, wiping out telegraph wires on a massive scale. The 2012 storm has the potential to be even more disruptive.

"The general consensus among general astronomers (and certainly solar astronomers) is that this coming Solar maximum (2012 but possibly later into 2013) will be the most violent in 100 years," News.com.au quoted astronomy lecturer and columnist Dave Reneke as saying.

"A bold statement and one taken seriously by those it will affect most, namely airline companies, communications companies and anyone working with modern GPS systems.

"They can even trip circuit breakers and knock out orbiting satellites, as has already been done this year," added Reneke.

No one really knows what effect the 2012-2013 Solar Max will have on today's digital-reliant society.

Dr Richard Fisher, director of NASA's Heliophysics division, told Reneke the super storm would hit like "a bolt of lightning", causing catastrophic consequences for the world's health, emergency services and national security unless precautions are taken.

NASA said that a recent report by the National Academy of Sciences

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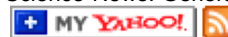
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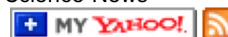
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found that if a similar storm occurred today, it could cause "1 to 2 trillion dollars in damages to society's high-tech infrastructure and require four to 10 years for complete recovery".

The reason for the concern comes as the sun enters a phase known as Solar Cycle 24.

Most experts agree, although those who put the date of Solar Max in 2012 are getting the most press.

They claim satellites will be aged by 50 years, rendering GPS even more useless than ever, and the blast will have the equivalent energy of 100 million hydrogen bombs.

"We know it is coming but we don't know how bad it is going to be," Fisher told Reneke.

"Systems will just not work. The flares change the magnetic field on the Earth and it's rapid, just like a lightning bolt. That's the solar effect," he added.

The findings are published in the most recent issue of Australasian Science. (ANI)

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