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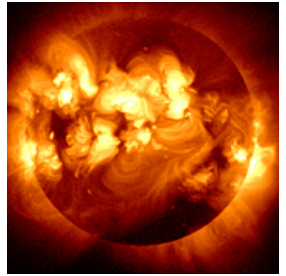
Tuesday, June 8, 2010

Scientists warn solar flares could disrupt power grid

A solar flare-up could cause huge damages to Earth's communication system and power grids.

by Alisa Roth

Space weather scientists meet in Washington, D.C. tomorrow to discuss the potential problems of solar flares, eruptions on the sun's surface that can cause massive disruptions in the electrical power grid. Solar flares send off little bursts of radiation that travel down to the Earth, and can impact communications systems, GPS systems, satellites, power grids, aviation interests and polar regions, according to Bill Murtagh, who works at the Space Weather Prediction Center at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



NASA's depiction of a sun storm. (Nasa.gov)

And he says get ready for more: Solar activity comes in cycles, and the next one starts in 2013. "It could be ugly: a storm could disrupt credit card and ATM transactions. Cell phone networks could go." According to Murtagh, the entire power grid could get zapped, which could cause trillions of dollars of damage.

W Kent Tobiska runs a company that does space weather forecasting. He says we can predict sun storms better, but it may not help. "Frankly right now, there is probably not an immediate solution, but certainly a necessity to plan for contingencies in case those kinds of things happen.

Scientists say there have been big sun storms before, but we've never been this dependent on the technology they can disrupt.

COMMENTS

By mark matson
From Houston, TX, 06/08/2010

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Its very frustrating to see how late these reports have reach the general public, since the knowledge of this current solar cycle has been predicted for years. Crisis management tends to fail & we the people will pay the price. Now trillions are needed to save the day & the electricity to avoid the largest problem our planet has faced in modern history.

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