

GEOMAGNETIC STORM KNOCKS 40 SPACEX STARLINK SATELLITES OUT OF ORBIT

It could mark the beginning of a dangerous new era for space exploration

Recently, an eruption of plasma spewed out of the Sun, sending a stream of charged particles into Earth's atmosphere. The event caused a geomagnetic storm, which [knocked 40 new SpaceX Starlink satellites out of orbit](#)...and out of commission. The kicker? Scientists confirm this is only the beginning of a [potential onslaught of such storms](#).

WELCOME TO SOLAR CYCLE 25

About every 11 years, the Sun goes through a cycle where it starts out with a minimum of activity, then builds to a maximum, brewing up more storms and spewing out more flares, then dying back down to a minimum. [Solar Cycle 25 just began](#) a few years ago, putting us now right at the spot where the Sun is about to start approaching its fiery maximum, which NASA estimates to occur sometime around 2025-26.

In other words, we are approaching the time when the Sun starts spewing out more flares of radiation and charged particles, which, when big enough, can cause geomagnetic storms here on Earth. Those storms vary in strength, but even weaker ones can seriously [interfere with our technological civilization](#) in a wide variety of ways.

They can knock out our power grids in an instant. They can literally make our atmosphere impenetrable to ground-based communications, cutting off all the planes and astronauts in the sky and space. And they can knock out satellites...which they just did.

THE STARLINK INCIDENT

On 3 February 2022, SpaceX launched a batch of its [Starlink satellites](#) into orbit. The next day, an eruption of plasma from the Sun sent charged particles streaming at our planet, which sent our magnetic field haywire and increased the density of our atmosphere. This increased density is caused by extra particles that push against satellites, which can pull them out of their paths in a phenomenon known as atmospheric drag.

And that is indeed what just happened to the new batch of Starlink satellites according to SpaceX, who confirmed in a statement that as many as 40 of the satellites were effectively dragged out of orbit. The company reported the satellites will either reenter or already have reentered the Earth's atmosphere, thus knocking them out of commission for good.

NASA'S PREDICTION

This time, it was only a few Starlink satellites. The event will cost SpaceX an estimated \$50-100 million. Next time, it could be satellites connecting hospitals, government agencies, et al. There is no way to overstate our society's reliance on technology today, just at the time when our Sun is entering its most active phase. Thus, this event might become less of an anomaly and more of a very dangerous norm.

Luckily, NASA predicts Cycle 25 to be much like Cycle 24, which was below-average in activity. Other scientists, however, have predicted Cycle 25 to be among [the strongest since record-keeping began in 1755](#).

Only time will tell how powerful this new solar cycle ends up being. But considering how much our civilization now relies on technology, it could very well prove to be one of humanity's most consequential cycles yet.