

A more than 4-kilometer asteroid is about to cross the Earth with the closest distance ever reached

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This asteroid will fly over and is 7 million kilometers from Earth, 18 times the distance between Earth and Moon, which is the closest distance to Earth that such a large asteroid has ever reached since NASA started an asteroid monitoring program near Earth about 20 years ago. Through observing radar on the ground, scientists will have a rare chance to study Florence thoroughly.

Flight route of Florence asteroid. Video: NASA.

According to Paul Chodas, manager of the Center for Near-Earth Research (CNEOS) at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, there used to be many small-size planets that ever flew over Earth at closer distances but Florence is the largest asteroid flying through our planet at such a close distance.

Astronomers first observed Florence in 1981 and the event of flying through early September is the asteroid's closest flight to Earth since 1890. According to scientists' calculations, by 2500, it was so close to Earth again.

According to NASA, in late August and early September, asteroids will fly through the constellations of Piscis Austrinus, Capricornus, Aquarius and Delphinus. At that time, its brightness increased and astronomers could clearly observe Florence through a small telescope.

NASA scientists will use ground-based radars including California's Goldstone Solar Radar and the Arecibo Observatory of the National Science Association in Puerto Rico to be able to determine the exact size of this asteroid. Florence even saw details on the surface at least 10 meters wide.

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