

# ***Solar Flare Threatens The Earth With a Storm***

WASHINGTON, July 15 (AP) — A huge solar eruption has taken place as predicted, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said, bringing a possibility of disrupted radio transmissions and bright northern lights

“The storm is expected to reach strong to severe levels, which can adversely affect satellite operations and power grids,” the agency said on Friday.

The agency’s Space Environment Center in Boulder, Colo., reported that a large sunspot group had produced one of the largest solar flares seen in recent years

The solar flare, which took place about 6:24 a.m., ejected billions of tons of plasma and charged particles into space, some of it heading toward Earth at three million miles per hour. The mass ejection then headed for the Earth’s magnetic field.

The magnetic field protects the planet from most such particles, but in a strong burst like this, some disruptions can occur. As the field deflects the particles they are moved toward the north and south poles, where they cause the northern and southern lights, called auroras.

The scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that the solar flare had already caused some effects on Earth, including some radio black-outs.

A satellite about one million miles away from the Earth detects geomagnetic storms approaching the planet and provides the agency’s forecasters with a warning about one hour before they reach Earth’s magnetic field.

In 1989, a severe solar storm knocked out power stations serving Canada and the northeastern states, as well as an electrical transformer in New Jersey. Since then, power grid and satellite operators have taken steps to protect their systems.

The sun is now in the most intense phase of its 11-year sunspot cycle.