

Re: Flash Blinded By Green Laser

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.astro.amateur/2005-01/0263.html>

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Date: 01/01/05

Date: Sat, 01 Jan 2005 22:10:16 GMT

On Fri, 31 Dec 2004 04:17:33 GMT, "Gary Honis" <ghonis@epix.net> wrote:

*>I've been watching the news channel reports today on green lasers and the
>dangers to pilots. I've also been reading the messages here about using
>green lasers to easily point out objects in the night sky. I don't own a
>green laser pointer but I have a unique opinion of green lasers because I
>was flash blinded by one accidentally turned on by Howie Glatter at a star
>party. When a pilot says he was "flash blinded" by a green laser, I know
>what he experienced and the disorientation that results. I have also been
>a very active dark sky advocate for many years and I feel that astronomers
>should strongly discourage their use for the following reasons:*

>

>They are a safety hazard and unsafe to dark adapted eyes.

If they are Class 3a lasers, under 5mW, they are absolutely NOT a safety hazard. Naturally they have the potential to ruin dark adaptation.

>They are another form of light pollution.

A matter of personal opinion only. They have valid uses for astronomers, and many would consider the benefits important enough to outweigh any minor issue of excess light. "Pollution" is something we live with. I could argue that you should never travel in any vehicle that burns fossil fuels because of pollution; you'd probably argue that is an extreme position. I similarly consider not using lasers as educational tools in astronomy because of "light pollution" an extreme position (akin to not using goto scopes because of noise pollution).

>Their use is unnecessary.

Again, a matter of personal opinion. Many of us do find them useful enough as teaching tools to qualify as "necessary".

>My initial report of the eye injury follows:

I don't mean to trivialize your experience, which was clearly disturbing. But you don't appear to be describing an injury. Retinal injuries from lasers are usually easy to detect by ophthalmic examination— was any damage documented? More than one study has clearly demonstrated that casual exposure to visible

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laser radiation from $<5\text{mW}$ sources cannot cause damage. If you are continuing to have problems, it suggests you may have one of several rare retinal diseases that produce acute phototoxicity, where exposure to a bright light can cause cell death. This is something you need to find out about, since long term exposure to sunlight will cause problems, as will brief exposures to headlights, flashlights, and other light sources that are capable of putting much more light onto your retina than a 5mW laser.

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