

# Re: Deep Impact Kicks Off Fourth of July with Deep Space Fireworks

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.space.policy/2005-07/msg00725.html>

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- *From:* [gherbert@xxxxxxxx](mailto:gherbert@xxxxxxxx) (George William Herbert)
  - *Date:* Sun, 24 Jul 2005 00:08:45 -0000
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<spinoza111@xxxxxxxx> wrote:

>> It is neither sane nor reasonable for you to keep making  
>> crazy assertions about effects you are afraid of happening,  
>> after everyone else here has repeatedly told you that you  
>> don't understand what's going on and don't know how to  
>> assess real risks.

>

>The problem here is that you define "sanity" and "reasonability" as the  
>randomly gerrymandered views which define mine as out of the loop.

Your beliefs about the risk structure associated with an Earth impact of debris from the Deep Impact probe makes as much technical sense as an inquiry as to the rate at which jet airliners commit statutory rape.

The question is technically a nonsequitur. The math involved in whether Deep Impact posed a threat to Earth is simple and conclusive: there is an answer, it's no.

It's not stupid or insane to ask the question. It's stupid *and* insane to insist, after it's been answered, that NASA safety culture issues somehow modify the risk that orbital mechanics will suddenly fail and rain comets on us.

The impact effects of Deep Impact are easily calculable by anyone with the proper training and math skills. Things don't "fall down" out of orbits. There are certain drag effects near planets, and orbital modification due to close encounters with planets, but those are all easily calculatable.

When the physics and math are simple, and the answer is no, the answer is no. You don't have to go off into statistical analysis or cultural review of the vehicle operators to

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determine that Deep Impact posed no risk.  
Those are irrelevant questions to the orbital  
mechanics issues.

For purposes of the question you posed originally,  
NASA could equally be perfect engineering saints,  
or deviant genocidal maniacs, and the orbital  
mechanics physics and math remain the same.

–george william herbert  
gherbert@xxxxxxxx / gherbert@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

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• **References:**

- ◆ **[Re: Deep Impact Kicks Off Fourth of July with Deep Space Fireworks](#)**  
    ◇ From: spinoza1111
- ◆ **[Re: Deep Impact Kicks Off Fourth of July with Deep Space Fireworks](#)**  
    ◇ From: George William Herbert
- ◆ **[Re: Deep Impact Kicks Off Fourth of July with Deep Space Fireworks](#)**  
    ◇ From: spinoza1111

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