

What if an asteroid was about to hit Earth, Scientists ponder question

Here's a hypothetical: a telescope detects an **asteroid** between 100 and 300 meters in **diameter** racing through our solar system at 14 kilometers per second, 57 million kilometers from Earth.

asteroid 小行星

diameter 直径

Astronomers estimate a one percent risk the space rock will **collide** with our planet on April 27, 2027. What should we do?

collide 碰撞

catastrophic 灾难的

It's this potentially **catastrophic** scenario that 300 astronomers, scientists, engineers and emergency experts are applying their collective minds to this week in a Washington suburb, the fourth such international effort since 2013.

This week's exercise seeks to simulate global response to a catastrophic **meteorite**. The first step is aiming telescopes at the threat to precisely calculate its speed and **trajectory**, following rough initial estimates.

meteorite 陨石; 流星

trajectory 轨道

Then it **boils down to** two choices: try to **deflect** the object, or **evacuate**. If it is less than 165 feet in diameter, the international consensus is to evacuate the threatened region. What about bigger objects? The plan is to launch a device toward the asteroid to divert its trajectory — like a **cosmic bumper car**.

boil down to 归结为

deflect 转向; 偏斜

evacuate 疏散; 撤退

cosmic 宇宙的

bumper car 蹦蹦车

One issue that remains is politics, says Romana Kofler, of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. "Who would be the decision making authority?" she asked. "The consensus was to leave this aspect out."