

- 5 Feb 05 S&T: ASTEROID 2004 MN4: A REALLY NEAR MISS - a 320m diameter rock will pass within 30,000km of the Earth on Friday 13 April 2029. Since the Earth travels at about 1800km/minute around the Sun a "miss" of 30,000km represents 15 minutes *in the least favorable configuration* (Earth moves one radius in 3.33 minutes). A 320m asteroid is not particularly "huge" but *if it hit* it would create a 6km wide crater and flatten buildings out to about 100km.

On 18 December, the object was rediscovered by Gordon Garrard at Siding Spring in New South Wales., Australia. This raised an alert among astronomers who, fortunately, now know that it will miss the Earth in 2029. But it will come back to haunt us in subsequent centuries.

Gordon was a member of Spaceguard Australia, which was disbanded in 1996 when Australian government funding was stopped. In frustration NASA has partly funded his important work.