

ESA's activities on outreach in Planetary Defence

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Since Jan 2009, European Space Agency (ESA) has a so-called 'Space Situational Awareness' programme, addressing, among other points, the topic of Planetary Defence. Planetary Defence means to ensure that we know about asteroids potentially hitting our planet, and what to do about it. Planetary Defence will be part of the future 'Space Safety Programme' (S2P) at ESA. Public outreach has always been a major part of these activities. For the Planetary Defence aspects, we use two main outlets for this: A technical portal at <http://neo.ssa.esa.int>, focusing on providing information on the scientific and technical community. It also provides some factual 'news items'. More general information is provided via ESA's rocket science blog, and the web presence of the Planetary Defence-related activities at http://www.esa.int/Our_Activities/Operations/Space_Situational_Awareness/Near-Earth_Objects_-_NEO_Segment.

This topic is a tricky one. While attractive to the public, one has to ensure that no false information which could generate unnecessary negative responses is distributed. Another important point is to educate both the technical experts on what to say, and the public reporters on how to interpret the information.

This presentation will highlight how ESA is preparing both their technical experts and the general reporters to properly convey this difficult topic.