

Flashes on the sun could help scientists predict solar flares

In the blazing upper atmosphere of the Sun, a team of scientists have found new clues that could help predict when and where the Sun's next flare might explode.

Using data from NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory, or SDO, researchers from NorthWest Research Associates, or NWRA, identified small signals in the upper layers of the solar atmosphere, the corona, that can help identify which regions on the Sun are more likely to produce solar flares—energetic bursts of light and particles released from the Sun.

They found that above the regions about to flare, the corona produced small-scale flashes—like small sparklers before the big fireworks.

This information could eventually help improve predictions of flares and space weather storms—the disrupted conditions in space caused by the Sun's activity. Space weather can affect Earth in many ways: producing auroras, endangering astronauts, disrupting radio communications, and even causing large electrical blackouts.

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