

500-kg space debris crashes into Kenya village

6th January 2025



There is a growing problem of space debris, to the extent that it could pose a danger to people. Earlier this week, an enormous metal ring crashed into the Kenyan village of Mukuku, 116 km southeast of the capital Nairobi. The mystery object was

approximately 2.5 metres wide, and weighed 500 kilograms. It had the potential to cause significant loss of life and damage to property. Fortunately, it landed in a small wood. Kenya's Space Agency said the hunk of metal was probably the separation ring from a recently-launched rocket. An official said: "Our experts will analyze the object...and keep the public informed of the outcome." It said this was "an isolated case".

The problem of space debris will get bigger as more companies and countries launch rockets into the heavens. There has been a heating up of the space race in the past decade. Many satellites from the USA, China, India and other nations are now orbiting Earth and probing deep space. Commercial companies, such as Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin have sent dozens of rockets into low-Earth orbit. The European Space Agency estimated that there are currently more than 14,000 tons of debris circling our planet. This includes over 170 million pieces of space junk that are wider than one millimetre. Most of these harmlessly burn up upon re-entry into our atmosphere.

Sources: euronews.com / livescience.com / independent.co.uk

Writing

We should stop polluting space with debris from rockets and satellites. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

problem / space debris / danger / metal ring / loss of life / hunk of metal / experts / rockets / satellites / the heavens / orbit / Earth / Elon Musk / planet / atmosphere

True / False

- 1) The article says more items of space debris are falling to Earth. T / F
- 2) A huge block of metal crashed into a village near Nairobi. T / F
- 3) The space debris damaged a lot of property. T / F
- 4) A space agency said the debris was from a rocket launched recently. T / F
- 5) A space rocket was launched to search for heaven. T / F
- 6) The space race is becoming more competitive. T / F
- 7) Commercial companies are now exploring deep space. T / F
- 8) Most space debris burns up when it re-enters Earth's atmosphere. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. debris | a. approximated |
| 2. pose | b. exceptional |
| 3. hunk | c. safely |
| 4. outcome | d. the wide blue yonder |
| 5. isolated | e. result |
| 6. the heavens | f. exploring |
| 7. probing | g. constitute |
| 8. estimated | h. orbiting |
| 9. circling | i. chunk |
| 10. harmlessly | j. detritus |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of space?
- b) Is debris in space worse than debris on Earth?
- c) Do companies have a responsibility to retrieve space debris?
- d) Do you worry about space debris falling on you?
- e) How can we reduce the volume of space debris?
- f) What will the space debris problem be like in 100 years from now?
- g) How important is space exploration?
- h) Would you like to see humans living in space?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. to the extent that it | a. metal ring |
| 2. an enormous | b. space |
| 3. cause significant | c. case |
| 4. keep the public informed | d. the heavens |
| 5. It said this was an isolated | e. upon re-entry |
| 6. launch rockets into | f. could pose a danger |
| 7. a heating up | g. circling our planet |
| 8. probing deep | h. loss of life |
| 9. 14,000 tons of debris | i. of the space race |
| 10. burn up | j. of the outcome |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do you think of space debris?
- Should companies get fined for leaving debris in space?
- What further problems might space debris cause?
- What do you know about SpaceX and Blue Origin?
- What do you think of there being 170 million pieces of space junk?
- How would you feel about going into space?
- What questions would you like to ask the space agency?

Spelling

- an osnomeur metal ring
- xotlpypaeraim 2.5 metres wide
- the potential to cause gncifitiasn loss of life
- probably the steirapano ring
- Our retxeps will analyze the object
- It said this was an aslodtei case
- anuchl rockets into the heavens
- bnogrip deep space
- milaoccerm companies
- into low-Earth borit
- debris cirilcqn our planet
- upon re-entry into our aophmesetr

Answers – Synonym Match

1. j	2. g	3. i	4. e	5. b
6. d	7. f	8. a	9. h	10. c

Role Play

Role A – Junk Mail

You think junk mail is the worst form of junk. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms. Also, tell the others which is the least junky of these (and why): junk food, junk TV shows or junk news stories.

Role B – Junk Food

You think junk food is the worst form of junk. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms. Also, tell the others which is the least junky of these (and why): junk mail, junk TV shows or junk news stories.

Role C – Junk TV Shows

You think junk TV shows is the worst form of junk. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms. Also, tell the others which is the least junky of these (and why): junk food, junk mail or junk news stories.

Role D – Junk News Stories

You think junk news stories is the worst form of junk. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms. Also, tell the others which is the least junky of these (and why): junk food, junk TV shows or junk mail.

Speaking – Junk

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst items of junk at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| • Junk mail | • Junk TV shows |
| • Junk food | • Junk news stories |
| • Junk in a drawer | • Junk folder |
| • Junk in a room | • Junk bonds |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	F	4	T	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.