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UNH Professor Says May 5 Planetary Alignment is a Scientific Sleeper

By [Tracy Manforte](#)
UNH News Bureau

DURHAM, N.H. -- The world emerged from Jan. 1, 2000, virtually unscathed, but another impending date, coupled with a cosmic spectacle, has sparked a resurgence of familiar doomsday predictions.

Beginning May 5, the Sun and six planets will form in near alignment, a celestial event of little scientific note, says Professor Eberhard Moebius, of the [Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space](#) at the University of New Hampshire

But doomsayers and authors of the book "5/5/2000: Ice, The Ultimate Disaster," disagree. They predict the alignment will trigger an accumulation of gravitational forces, causing the Earth's crust to slide and poles to shift. It will end with a melting of the polar ice caps and the submergence of large areas of Earth, they say.

Before you dust off the Y2K survival gear and run for the nearest bunker, don't believe the hype, counters Moebius.

Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury and Earth all will be within 25 degrees of the Sun, with Saturn and Jupiter the closest at 3 degrees. But from a scientific reading, Moebius is not impressed. "They're actually not very tightly aligned. We've seen better in previous years," he says.

"There are always some predictions based on special dates and geometric figures. Alluding to catastrophes based on sky events has been popular throughout history," he continues. Even the May 5, 2000, prediction appears to be based on hard scientific evidence -- to a non-scientist, that is.

"With the alignment, gravity pulls on Earth from one side," Moebius explains. "However, the additional force from the combination of these planets is only about 3/100,000 of the Sun's force on the Earth." New moons, full moons and resulting tide shifts cause more of a disturbance.

"Planet alignments are generally beautiful events to watch, but of no concern to us." And while the line-up

could be a spectacle for stargazers, Moebius notes that Saturn and Jupiter will be out-shined by the glare of the sun.

May 1, 2000

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