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Wavelength dependence of solar flare irradiation and its influence on the thermosphere

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3 Abstract.

The wavelength dependence of solar flare enhancement is one of the important factors determining how the Thermosphere-Ionosphere (T-I) system 5 response to flares. To investigate the wavelength dependence of solar flare, 6 the Flare Irradiance Spectral Model (FISM) has been run for 34 X-class 7 flares. The results show that the percentage increases of solar irradiance at 8 flare peak comparing to pre-flare condition have a clear wavelength depen-9 dence. In the wavelength range between 0 - 195 nm, it can vary from 1% 10 to 10000%. The solar irradiance enhancement is largest (1000%) in the 11 XUV range (0 - 25 nm), and is about 100% in EUV range (25 - 120 nm). 12 The influence of different wavebands on the T-I system during the October 13 28th, 2003 flare (X17.2-class) has also been examined using the latest ver-14 sion of National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) Thermosphere-15 Ionosphere-Electrodynamics General Circulation Model (TIE-GCM). While 16

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- the globally integrated solar energy deposition is largest in the 0 14 nm
 waveband, the impact of solar irradiance enhancement on the thermosphere
 at 400 km is largest for 25 105 nm waveband. The effect of 122 195 nm
- ²⁰ is small in magnitude, but it decays slowly.

1. Introduction

Solar flare is a sudden, intense release of magnetic energy in the atmosphere of the Sun, 21 which produces rapid increase in electromagnetic radiation from gamma rays to radio wave-22 lengths. One can classify a flare as a C, M, or X flare according to the maximum flux of soft 23 X-ray flux in the 0.1 - 0.8 nm range of the spectrum measured near the Earth [Garcia, 2000]. 24 While C-class flares are a common occurrence during years near solar maximum, the frequency 25 of X-class flares is always low. The solar UV photons are a heating source to the neutral and 26 ionized constituents of the thermosphere-ionosphere (T-I) system. The extra ionization in the 27 ionosphere caused by flares increases electron density, which influences the absorption and re-28 fraction of radio waves propagating through the ionosphere from one station to another. Also, 29 flares are often associated with coronal mass ejection (CME), which may cause significant ge-30 omagnetic storms [Tandberg-Hanssen and Emslie, 1988]. 31

Previously, studies of the thermospheric and ionospheric responses to solar flares have been 32 conducted [Tsurutani et al., 2005; Sutton et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2011]. The impacts of 33 flares to T-I system varies because flares may have different magnitudes, locations on the solar 34 disk, rise rates and decay rates. The enhancement of the extreme ultraviolet (EUV) spectral 35 irradiance depends on the location of a flare, while flare enhancement of soft X-ray (XUV) 36 depends weakly on the location [*Qian et al.*, 2010]. There is also a large spectral difference 37 between flares in magnitude [Thomson et al., 2004]. We expect that the impact of solar flare 38 to the upper atmosphere depends on the spectral components with different wavelength, which 39 not only have different irradiance, but also ionize different parts of the upper atmosphere. The 40

⁴¹ XUV dominates ionization in the lower thermosphere (< 150 km), while EUV dominates in the ⁴² upper thermosphere [*Qian et al.*, 2011].

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how different wavebands of solar flare im-43 pact thermosphere and ionosphere. We use the National Center for Atmospheric Research 44 (NCAR) Thermosphere-Ionosphere-Electrodynamics General Circulation Model (TIE-GCM) 45 [Roble and Ridley, 1994] to simulate the thermospheric and ionospheric responses to idealized 46 flares. Flare spectra estimated by the Flare Irradiance Spectral Model (FISM) [Chamberline 47 et al., 2007, 2008] are used as solar input to TIE-GCM. The solar flare spectrum is divided 48 into 6 different wavebands: 0 - 14 nm, 14 - 25 nm, 25 - 105 nm, 105 - 120 nm, 121.56 nm 49 $(Lyman - \alpha)$ and 122 - 195 nm. Due to large variations during flares for different wavelengths 50 and lack of measurements from SEE, the uncertainty of FISM flare component has wavelength 51 dependence and varies from 10% to above 100%. However, compared to models with only daily 52 components, FISM improves the estimation of solar flares significantly. 53

2. Model Description

2.1. FISM Solar Flare Model

Flare Irradiance Spectral Model (FISM) is an empirical model of the solar irradiance spectrum from 0.1 to 195 nm at 1nm resolution and on 1-minute time cadence. The high temporal resolution of FISM makes it possible to study the variations due to solar flares. This model is based on the data provided by the Solar Extreme ultraviolet Experiment (SEE) on the Thermosphere Ionosphere Mesosphere Energetic and Dynamics (TIMED) satellite and the Solar Stellar Irradiance Comparison Experiment (SOLSTICE) on the Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite (UARS). The flare component of FISM including both the impulsive and gradual phase variations is based on a reference set of 39 large flares from 2002 to 2005 measured by the TIMED SEE [*Chamberline et al.*, 2008].

2.2. NCAR TIE-GCM

The latest version (v1.94) of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) TIE-63 GCM is employed. TIE-GCM is a first-principle, three-dimensional, non-linear representation 64 of the coupled thermosphere and ionosphere system. It solves the momentum, energy and 65 continuity equations for neutral and ion species in pressure coordinates [Roble et al., 1988], with 66 a self-consistent calculation of ionospheric wind dynamo effects [Richmond et al., 1992]. The 67 external forcing of TIE-GCM are mainly the solar irradiance, magnetospheric energy, and tidal 68 perturbations at the lower boundary of the model. Magnetospheric energy inputs include auroral 69 particle precipitation and high-latitude ion convection. The Heelis potential model [Heelis et al., 70 1982] is used to specify the high-latitude electric field in this study. The TIE-GCM is run with 71 $5^{\circ} \times 5^{\circ} \times$ half scale height resolution (longitude \times latitude \times altitude). 72

Another NCAR upper atmospheric model, Thermosphere-Ionosphere-Mesosphere-73 Electrodynamics General Circulation Model (TIME-GCM) [Roble and Ridley, 1994] covers 74 the altitudinal range from 30 km to 600 km, including mesosphere. Compared to TIE-GCM, 75 TIME-GCM includes absorption in UV wavelengths such as O_2 absorption in Shumann-Runge 76 continuum and Shumann-Runge bands, and O_3 dissociation from the Herbzberg, Hartley, 77 Huggins, and Chapius bands [Qian et al., 2011]. However, TIE-GCM and TIME-GCM use 78 the same solar energy deposition scheme for the XUV and EUV, and also photoionization is 79 calculated for the altitude above 97 km for both TIE-GCM and TIME-GCM. Therefore, both 80 could be used for flare study. 81

3. Results

3.1. FISM data for X-class flares

Figure 1 depicts the FISM outputs for a X17.2 flare on October 28th, 2003 (day of year 82 301). The top panel shows the time variation of total solar flux integrated for 0 - 195 nm 83 wavelength, which started to increase at 11:00 UT and reached maximum flux 100 mW/m^2 at 84 around 11:07 UT. The wavelength dependences of solar flux before flare and at flare peak are 85 shown in the middle panel. The pre-flare dependence is in black which is also denoted by the 86 triangle in the top panel, while the red line is for the time at flare peak which is denoted by 87 diamond in the top panel. The flux enhancement varies for different wavelengths, which is also 88 illustrated in the bottom panel, the percentage increase of solar flux comparing the flare peak to 89 the pre-flare condition has wavelength dependence. In the wavelength range between 0 - 195 90 nm, the percentage increase can vary from several percents up to 10000%. The solar irradiance 91 increased largest in the XUV range, about 1000% on average, and increased about 100% in 92 EUV range on average. 93

To have a better understanding of the wavelength dependence of percentage increase of X-94 class flares, we examine the spectra of 34 X-class flares observed between year 1989 and 2012 95 using FISM. As depicted in Figure 2, the percentage increase can vary from 0.1% up to 10000% 96 depending on the wavelength in 0 - 195 nm range. There is not very large enhancement in 15 - 25 97 nm wavelength range, which contains many strong solar emission lines, such as the Fe IX. When 98 a flare happens these emissions don't increase very much, and sometimes even decrease. This is 99 because most of these emissions are formed in the solar corona at the approximate temperatures 100 of the corona around 1 to 2 million degrees (Kelvin). When there is a significant heating that 101 heats the source ions to much higher temperatures, Fe IX quickly becomes Fe XX, for example. 102

Therefore, the source ion population is depleted [Woods et al., 2011]. The low enhancement in 103 115 - 129 nm range is rather instrumental. In the TIMED/SEE instrument, which FISM is based 104 on, an Aluminum filter had to be put in place to block 99% of the Lyman – α emission line 105 at 121.56 nm so that it will not saturate the detector [Eparvier et al., 2001]. However, it does 106 not allow the 'wings' on each side to be measured significantly. Therefore, they all behave very 107 close to the Lyman – α emission in the model. It was also found that there is an approximately 108 linear relation between solar irradiance in wavelength 0.1 - 0.8 nm and irradiance in 0 - 14 nm, 109 which are all coronal emission [Chamberline et al., 2008]. 110

The solar spectra from FISM is used as the solar input for TIE-GCM. Since the purpose 111 of our study in this paper is to investigate the thermospheric response to flares in different 112 wavelengths, the penetration depths of solar irradiance with different wavelengths through the 113 atmosphere should also be a criteria to divide the spectra into different wavebands. The local 114 absorption rate depends on the product of absorption cross-section and the total abundance of 115 the absorbing species along the path, which is known as the optical depth. The maximum 116 absorption occurs at the altitude where the optical depth is unit. According to the wavelength 117 dependence of altitude for unit optical depth shown in Figure 1 in DeLand and Cebula [2012] 118 (adapted from [Meier, 1991]), we divide the whole irradiance spectra from 0 - 195 nm into 6 119 different wavebands: 0 - 14 nm, 14 - 25 nm, 25 - 105 nm, 105 - 120 nm, 121.56 nm, 122 - 195 120 nm. 121

3.2. Response of high-altitude thermosphere to flare at different wavelengths

As discussed above, in order to investigate the influence of solar flare at different wavelengths, we divide the irradiance spectra of FISM (0 - 195 nm) into six different wavebands: 0-14 nm and 14-25 nm wavebands for XUV irradiance, 25-105 nm and 105-120 nm for EUV irradiance,

Lyman-alpha line (121.56 nm) and 122-195 nm waveband for far ultraviolet (FUV) irradiance. 125 On October 28th, 2003 (Day of year, 301), there was a X17.2-class solar flare, which was 126 one of the most severe flares in the last solar cycle. For each waveband, for example, 0 - 14 nm 127 wavelengths, we run 2 cases using TIE-GCM. For case 1, we run TIE-GCM using constant solar 128 input at pre-flare condition for DOY 301, and for case 2, using time varying solar input only 129 within 0 - 14 nm wavelength. The difference between these two runs represents the influence 130 of solar irradiance within 0 - 14 nm waveband to the thermosphere. The influences of solar 131 irradiance within other wavebands are also calculated in this way. To minimize geomagnetic 132 influences, all the simulations are under the geomagnetic quiet condition (Kp = 1). In this 133 study, the results are analyzed in terms of values integrated or averaged over the globe. 134

Figure 3 shows the temporal variations of solar irradiance flux in 0 - 14 nm, 25 - 105 nm 135 and 122 - 195 nm wavebands and their influences on the thermosphere. We only show the 136 wavebands of FISM spectrum which have non-negligible thermospheric effect. The solar flux 137 variations for different wavebands calculated from FISM are depicted in the first panel, which 138 illustrates that the solar flux in 0 - 14 nm waveband was quite small before flare compared to 139 that in 122 - 195 nm waveband, but it increased most by about 20 mW/m^2 . The second panel 140 shows the enhancements of globally integrated solar energy deposition in the upper atmosphere 141 during the flare. The peak of solar energy deposition for 0 - 14 nm is the largest and almost 142 three times larger than the peak for 25 - 105 nm, which is also shown in table 1. However, 143 the time integration of global solar energy (TIGSE) for 25 - 105 nm waveband is only half of 144 the TIGSE for 0 - 14 nm and even larger than the one for 122 - 195 nm waveband. The third 145 panel depicts the Joule heating enhancement that shows quite different responses in time and 146 magnitude for different wavebands. There is a rather rapid and large enhancement of Joule 147

heating responding to the solar flare irradiance for 0 - 14 nm waveband, however, for 122 - 195 148 nm, the peak of Joule heating enhancement is negligible and has a obvious delay to the flare 149 peak. The response for 25 - 105 nm is somewhat combination of the ones for 0 - 14 nm and 122 150 - 195 nm wavebands. The total timely integration of global solar energy increased by 6.79e10 151 J for the solar flare on October 28th, 2003, while the timely integration of global joule heating 152 increased comparably little by 1.86e09 J. The fourth and bottom panels depict the thermospheric 153 temperature and density perturbations at 400 km. The altitude 400 km was chosen because this 154 is the altitude range where low-Earth satellites fly. As also illustrated in table 1, although the 155 largest energy deposition comes from solar irradiance in 0 - 14 nm wavelength, most of the 156 thermospheric perturbations at 400 km are due to 25 - 105 nm waveband while the impact of 157 122 - 195 nm is negligible. The high-altitude temperature and density perturbations divided by 158 the solar energy deposition peak or the TIGSE is an order larger for 25 - 105 nm waveband 159 than those for the other two wavebands. Therefore, the solar irradiance in 25 - 105 nm of 160 EUV influences the high-altitude thermosphere most effectively. The high-altitude temperature 161 and neutral density response $3 \sim 5$ hours later than the flare peak, as a result of the different 162 energy deposition heights and amounts for irradiance with different wavelengths. As discussed 163 in *Huang et al.* [2012], the characteristic response timescale of the upper-thermosphere depends 164 on the height of heat deposition, as shown in Figure 4. The temperature response at 400 km to 165 the high-altitude heating is much stronger and faster than the response to low-altitude heating. 166

3.3. Response of T-I system to flare at different wavelengths at flare peak

Figure 4 depicts the altitudinal distributions of perturbations due to solar irradiance in different wavebands at the flare peak. Most of the solar energy is deposited below 150 km by the 0 - 14 nm and 122 - 195 nm wavebands, while the energy deposition in 25 - 105 nm dominates

above ~ 160 km. This results in the largest perturbations of electron density and Pedersen 170 conductivity due to 0 - 14 nm waveband in E region and due to 25 - 105 nm in F region. En-171 hancement of the 122-195nm waveband impacts the thermosphere through dissociation, which 172 results in little effect on the electron density and Pedersen conductivity variation. The tempera-173 ture perturbation below ~ 150 km is also largest due to energy deposition in 0 - 14 nm and 122 174 - 195 nm wavebands, while for the upper thermosphere it is largest due to deposition in 25 - 105 175 nm. Therefore, the solar radiation in 25 - 105 nm is important for high altitude ionization and 176 heating at flare peak. 177

3.4. Temporal variation of thermospheric enhancements due to solar irradiance at different wavelengths

The enhancements were calculated through taking the difference between the flare and non-178 flare runs for each waveband. Figure 5, 6, 7 and 8 show the temporal variations of the 179 altitudinal distribution of solar energy deposition percentage increase, Pedersen conductivity 180 percentage increase, temperature increase and neutral density percentage increase due to solar 181 irradiance in different wavelengths. The line plots represent the temporal variations at 400 km 182 altitude. As shown in Figure 5, the total solar energy deposited into the upper atmosphere 183 increases up to 140% due to the solar irradiance enhancement within 0 - 195 nm, initially 184 deposited under 150 km but lasts longer in the higher altitude. The Pedersen conductivity 185 enhancement can reach up to 300% in low altitudes. The absorption rate at an arbitrary altitude 186 is proportional to the multiplication of neutral density and photon flux. Changes in the upper 187 atmosphere following a flare might not simply due to the thermal inertia of the atmosphere, 188 but might partly due to the fact that the altered density structure of the atmosphere absorbs 189 non-flare irradiance differently from before the flare. For example, it is possible that the GSE 190

¹⁹¹ enhancement at high altitudes after the flare is not due to the residual flare irradiance, but rather ¹⁹² to the fact that the neutral density has increased, so that more non-flare irradiance is absorbed ¹⁹³ at a given altitude. The maximum of temperature enhancement is 45 K and the maximum of ¹⁹⁴ density enhancement is about 17%, which are both found in high altitudes and have $3 \sim 4$ hour ¹⁹⁵ time delay to the flare peak. As discussed previously, the thermospheric response at 400 km to ¹⁹⁶ the high-altitude heating is much stronger and faster than the response to low-altitude heating ¹⁹⁷ [*Huang et al.*, 2012].

We divide the whole spectrum from 0 - 195 nm into different wavebands and investigate the 198 impact of each waveband on the T-I system. As illustrated in the comparison of Figure 6, 199 7 and 8, the temporal and altitudinal response of T-I system to solar flare irradiance varies 200 significantly with irradiance wavebands. Although the maximum percentage increase of energy 20 deposition is about 100%, the solar energy enhancement peaks at lower altitude below 150 km 202 for 0 - 14nm, while the solar energy in 25 - 105 nm waveband deposited at higher altitude and 203 increases up to 70%. The disturbances in T-I system, for example, globally averaged Pedersen 204 conductivity, temperature and neutral density show that most of the high-altitude perturbations 205 are due to 25 - 105 nm (part of EUV) waveband. Also, the energy deposition enhancement in 206 122 - 195 nm waveband is below 150 km and impacts the thermosphere through dissociation, 207 therefore, it has little effect on Pedersen conductivity, temperature and neutral density. However, 208 the temperature and neutral density perturbations due to solar irradiance in this waveband do 209 not decay as fast as those due to irradiance in 0 - 14 nm and 25 - 105 nm. 210

Figure 9 illustrates the nearly linear response of T-I system at 400 km to different wavebands of solar irradiance. The black lines represent the globally averaged perturbations of solar energy deposition, neutral density, temperature and electron density at 400 km due to the whole flare spectrum from 0 to 195 nm, while the red lines represent the summations of perturbations at 400 km due to 6 separated bands. The high-altitude response to the flare spectra in 0 - 195 nm is almost a linear combination of those to separated wavebands, which suggests a possibility to predict the variations of temperature, neutral and electron density at satellites orbits responding to the future flares according to the solar irradiance enhancement measured at different wavebands.

4. Conclusions

The response of T-I system to flare irradiance could be different in magnitude and duration 220 due to the flares with different deposition heights, magnitudes of enhancement and durations 221 for different wavebands. The wavelength dependence of solar flare enhancement is one of the 222 important factors determining how the terrestrial atmosphere response to flares with different 223 enhancement in wavelength. The FISM data show that for the 34 X-class solar flares between 224 year 1989 and 2012, the solar irradiance comparing the flare peak to the pre-flare condition has 225 wavelength dependence. In the wavelength range between 0 - 195 nm, the percentage increase 226 can vary from 1% to 10000%. The solar irradiance increased largest in the XUV range (0 - 25 227 nm), about 1000% on average, and the one in EUV range (25 - 120 nm) increased about 100% 228 on average. 229

In this paper, we investigate how the thermosphere and ionosphere respond to the different wavebands of solar irradiance for the X17.2-class solar flare on October 28th, 2003. The solar irradiance spectra of FISM (0 - 195 nm) is divides into six different wavebands: 0-14 nm and 14-25 nm wavebands for XUV range, 25-105 nm and 105-120 nm for EUV, $Lyman - \alpha$ line (121.56 nm) and 122-195 nm waveband for FUV. For each waveband, for example, 0 - 14 nm wavelengths, we run 2 cases using TIE-GCM, one case 1 with constant solar input at pre-flare

condition, and the other case with time varying solar input only within 0 - 14 nm wavelength. 236 The enhancements are calculated through taking the difference between the flare and pre-flare 237 runs. The globally integrated solar energy deposition and the time integration of it was largest 238 due to 0-14nm waveband compared to other wavebands. However, the time integration of Joule 239 heating energy enhancement due to solar irradiance increases comparably for 0-14nm and 25-240 105nm wavebands. The impact of solar irradiance enhancement on the thermosphere at 400 km 241 is largest for 25 - 105 nm waveband, which accounts for about 33 K in total 45 K temperature 242 disturbance, and about 7.4% in total 11% neutral density disturbance. The effect of 122 - 195 243 nm irradiance is little in magnitude, since it impacts the thermosphere through dissociation. 244 Therefore, the solar irradiation at 25 - 105 nm impacts high-altitude heating and ionization 245 most effectively. 246

For the future work, we plan to investigate more X-class solar flare events with different magnitudes and durations to get a better understanding and conclusion of their influences at different wavelengths.

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Table 1. Heating efficiency of solar irradiance at different wavelengths to thermosphere at 400 km.

	0-14 nm	25-105 nm	122 – 195 nm
δ SE peak (GW)	1216	379	548
TIGSE (J)	3.48e10	1.85e10	1.08e10
δ Tn peak (K)	8.4	32.8	1.2
δho peak	2.50%	7.39%	0.58%
$\delta Tn / \delta SE (K/GW)$	0.0069	0.0865	0.0022
δ Tn/TIGSE (K/J)	2.41e-10	17.73e-10	1.09e-10
$\delta \rho / \delta SE (\%/GW)$	0.0021	0.0200	0.0011
$\delta \rho / \text{TIGSE} (\%/\text{J})$	0.7e-10	4.0e-10	0.5e-10

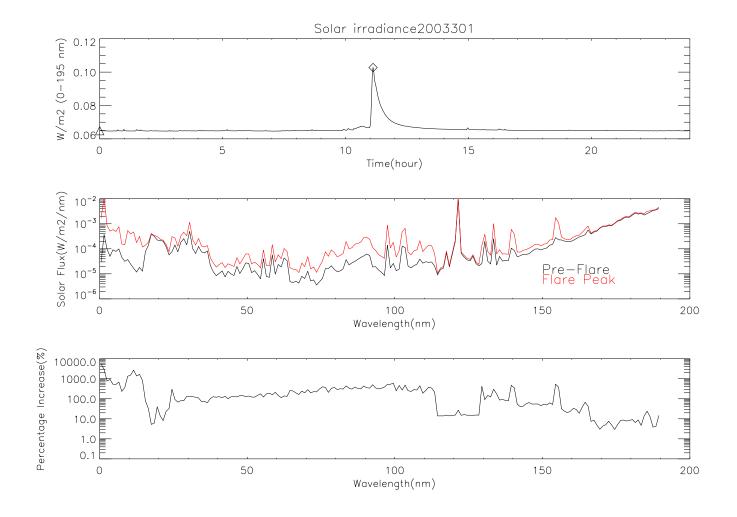


Figure 1. FISM solar irradiance results for X17.2 flare on October 28th, 2003 (day of year 301). Top: Time variation of total solar irradiance integrated over wavelength from 0 to 195 nm. The flare reached maximum flux $0.1 W/m^2$ at around 11:07 UT. Middle: Solar spectra before flare at the moment denoted by triangle in top panel (black) and at flare peak denoted by diamond (red). Bottom: Percentage increase of solar irradiance comparing the peak and pre-flare conditions.

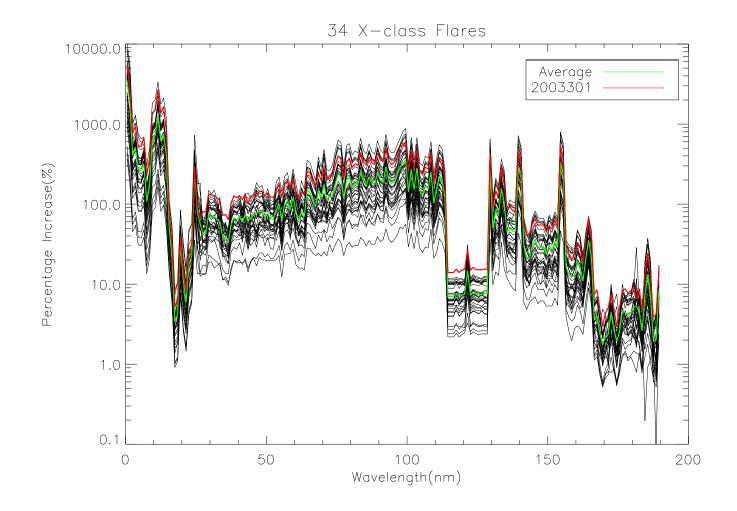


Figure 2. FISM solar irradiance results for percentage increases comparing the peak and pre-flare conditions for 34 X-class flares happened between year 1989 and 2012. The red line denotes the October 28th, 2003 flare event, and the green line is the average of 34 X-class flares. The low enhancement in 15 - 25 nm is a result of the depletion of source ion, while the low enhancement in 115 - 129 nm is rather instrumental.

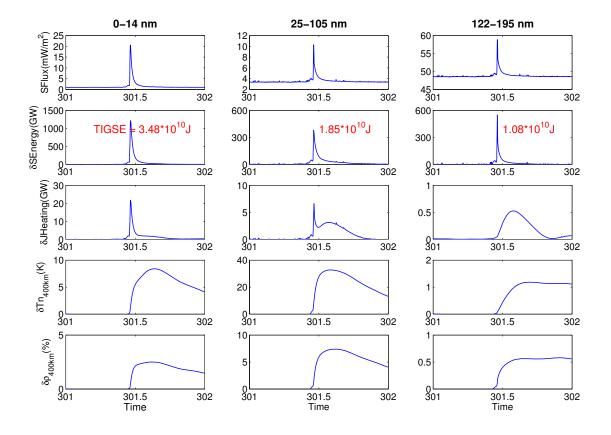


Figure 3. Time variations of different wavebands for DOY 301, first column for 0 - 14 nm, second column for 25 - 105 nm and third column for 122 - 195 nm. Top panel: Solar flux calculated from FISM. Second panel: Perturbation of global solar energy deposited into the upper atmosphere. The time integration of global solar energy (TIGSE) deposited are also labeled in red. Third panel: Perturbation of globally integrated Joule heating. Fourth panel: Globally averaged perturbation of temperature at 400 km. Bottom panel: Globally averaged perturbation of neutral density at 400 km.

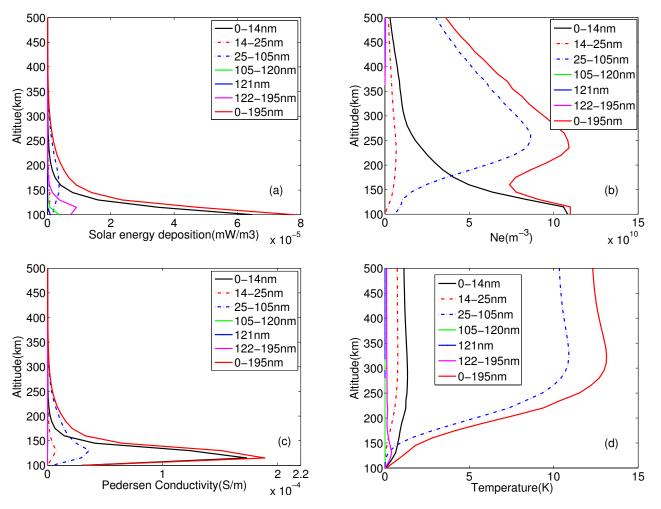


Figure 4. Altitudinal distribution of TIE-GCM simulation results at flare peak for solar irradiance in different wavelength ranges. (a) Globally averaged solar energy deposition. (b) Globally averaged electron density. (c) Globally averaged Pedersen conductivity. (d) Globally averaged temperature.

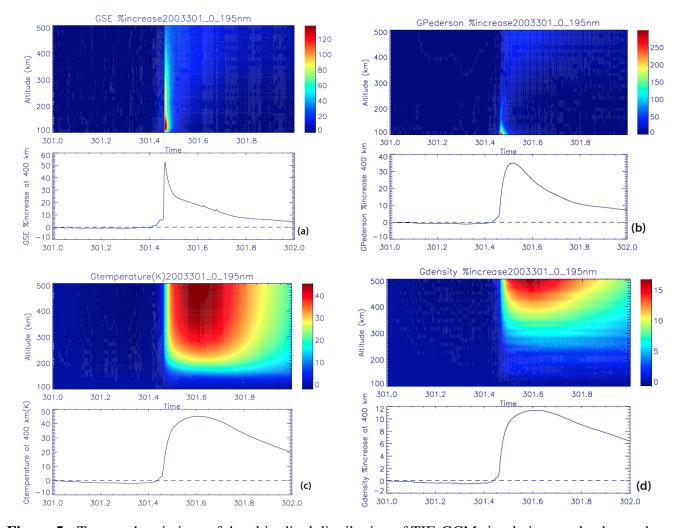


Figure 5. Temporal variations of the altitudinal distribution of TIE-GCM simulation results due to the solar irradiance enhancement in 0 - 195 nm wavelength range. (a) Globally averaged percentage increase of solar energy deposition. (b) Globally averaged percentage increase of Pedersen conductivity. (c) Globally averaged temperature enhancement. (d) Globally averaged percentage increase of neutral density. The line plots represent the temporal variations at 400 km altitude.

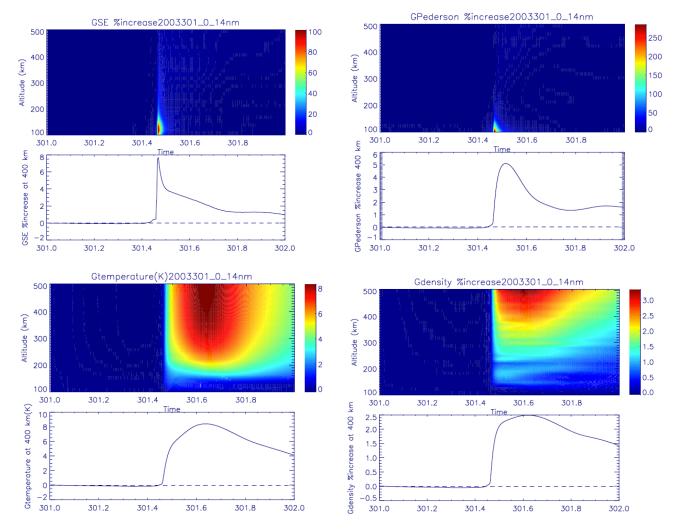


Figure 6. Same as Figure 5 but for the simulation results due to the solar irradiance enhancement in 0 - 14 nm wavelength range.

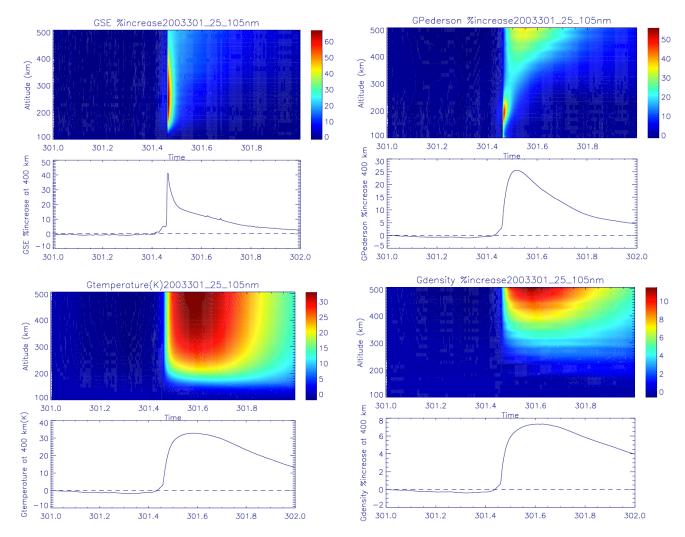


Figure 7. Same as Figure 5 but for the simulation results due to the solar irradiance enhancement in 25 - 105 nm wavelength range.

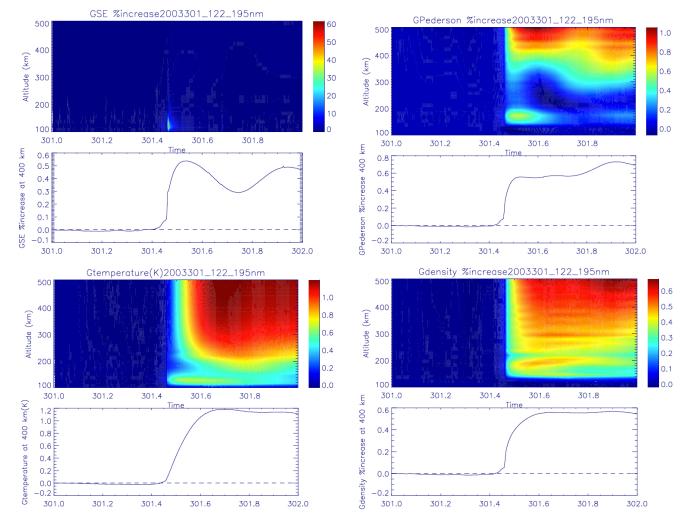


Figure 8. Same as Figure 5 but for the simulation results due to the solar irradiance enhancement in 122 - 195 nm wavelength range.

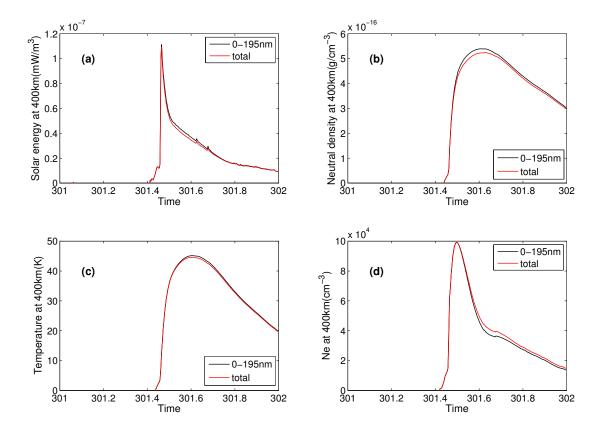


Figure 9. Comparison of TIE-GCM simulation results at 400 km. The black lines show the variations using FISM solar spectra in 0 - 195 nm as solar input, while the red lines represent the total sum of variations due to FISM spectra in separated wavebands. (a) Globally averaged solar energy deposited at 400 km. (b) Globally averaged neutral density at 400 km. (c) Globally averaged temperature at 400 km. (d) Globally averaged electron density at 400 km.

August 14, 2012, 3:11pm

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