



Cosmic impact risk: early warning and response capacity

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Impacts by asteroids and comets have been recognised as potentially very hazardous to humankind not only because of the direct damages they can provide to people and properties, but mainly because of the indirect, long-lasting consequences on the local and global social structures. In this paper, after assessing the nature of the problem and its frequency, we will analyze the level of risk and will consider the vulnerability of social structures to this risk. The second part of the paper is devoted to a review of the current warning systems and to their ability to effectively provide a sufficient warning time to allow countermeasures to be adopted. These are currently being studied and proposed for testing, but none of them is available at this time, implying a rather low-level overall preparedness of humankind for this kind of natural disaster.