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NASA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hosted an asteroid emergency planning exercise on October 25 in El Segundo, California. The exercise centered on a hypothetical event, in which an asteroid discovered in 2016 would hit southern California in 2020.

The scenario presented a unique challenge for emergency managers, who typically plan for higher-probability events, such as wildfires and floods, with much less lead time. Because the public knew four years ahead that an asteroid was going to strike, emergency managers faced many challenges fielding public responses and media reports as communities awaited their doom. NASA researchers also faced challenges during the exercise, as they attempted to calculate the location and radius of the asteroid, as well as the damage it would cause.

The exercise was the third in a series of asteroid hazard workshops that were developed to foster collaboration between NASA and FEMA under the NASA's recently established Planetary Defense Coordination Office. A previous exercise held in Houston in 2013 focused on a scenario in which NASA attempted to stop an asteroid impact by deflecting it using spacecraft designed to change the object's course via direct impact.

Sources: NASA.gov
