

» **Print**

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, use the Reprints tool at the top of any article or visit: [www.reutersreprints.com](http://www.reutersreprints.com).

---

## Defunct NASA satellite to crash to Earth this week

Mon, Sep 19 2011

By Irene Klotz

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (Reuters) - A defunct NASA science satellite is expected to fall back to Earth on Friday, showering debris somewhere on the planet although scientists cannot predict exactly where, officials said.

The 6.5-ton Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite, or UARS, was carried into orbit during a space shuttle mission in 1991. It operated for 14 years, collecting measurements of ozone and other chemicals in the atmosphere.

Since completing its mission in 2005, UARS has been slowly losing altitude, tugged by Earth's gravity. On Friday, the 35-foot-long, 15-foot diameter (10.6-metres long, 4.5-metres diameter) satellite is expected to plunge into the atmosphere, NASA reported on its website.

While most of the spacecraft will be incinerated, scientists expect up to 26 pieces, with a combined mass of about 1,100 pounds (500 kg) to survive the fiery re-entry and fall down somewhere on Earth.

The satellite's orbit passes over most of the planet, from as far north as northern Canada to the southern part of South America.

NASA said the chance a piece of UARS debris will strike a person is about one in 3,200. The debris will mostly likely fall into an ocean or land in an uninhabited region of Earth.

Satellites as large as UARS re-enter Earth's atmosphere about once a year.

NASA said there have been no reports of any deaths or injuries to people from falling debris.

The largest chunk of wreckage from UARS is expected to be about 331 pounds (151 kg), says Nicholas Johnson, chief scientist of NASA's Orbital Debris Program office at the Johnson Space Center in Houston.

As of Sunday, UARS was in a 133-mile by 149-mile (215-km by 240-km) high orbit around Earth. Re-entry is expected some time on Friday, although it could happen as early as Thursday or as late as Saturday.

The agency is posting updates on its website, [www.nasa.gov/uars](http://www.nasa.gov/uars).

(Editing by [Kevin Gray](#) and [Cynthia Osterman](#))



---

© Thomson Reuters 2011. All rights reserved. Users may download and print extracts of content from this website for their own personal and non-commercial use only. Republication or redistribution of Thomson Reuters content, including by framing or similar means, is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Thomson Reuters. Thomson Reuters and its logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of the Thomson Reuters group of companies around the world.

Thomson Reuters journalists are subject to an Editorial Handbook which requires fair presentation and disclosure of relevant interests.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, use the Reprints tool at the top of any article or visit: [www.reutersreprints.com](http://www.reutersreprints.com).