**Asteroids**

There are many Hollywood movies about asteroids crashing into Earth and destroying us. The space agency NASA may have an answer to stop this happening. It tested a spacecraft that could change the direction of an asteroid so it doesn't hit our planet. The $325 million spacecraft is called DART. It set off on its journey in November 2021. Its goal was to crash into an asteroid called Dimorphos. DART hit the centre of the asteroid at 24,000 kph on Monday. Scientists do not know if they have changed the asteroid's direction. They will find out in a few weeks when they get data.

It is the first time for humans to change the direction of an asteroid. A NASA spokesperson said DART was the first of many "planetary protection missions". He talked about the end of the dinosaurs. He said: "We want to have a better chance than the dinosaurs had 65 million years ago." He added that all the dinosaurs could do was to "look up and say, 'Oh asteroid'". NASA also said DART was a "new era for humankind". It said: "It's an era in which we potentially have the capability to protect ourselves from something like a dangerous, hazardous asteroid impact."

*2022 Breaking News*

**Is NASA Aware of Any Earth-Threatening Asteroids?**

*Is NASA aware of any Earth-threatening asteroids? No, luckily there are no known asteroid threats to Earth for at least 100 years. But that doesn’t mean we’re not looking — just in case. NASA JPL asteroid expert Davide Farnocchia breaks it down*.

Now, we know that asteroid impacts have happened in the past and can certainly happen in the future. But we should keep in mind that those are rare events. An asteroid impact that could cause serious regional damage only happens every few thousand years or longer.

Still, it's a good idea to protect us against that possibility and the rule of the game is find asteroids before they find us. And that's why for over 20 years, NASA has been funding search programs to observe the sky pretty much every single night to find and track asteroids.

And we've been doing a pretty good job at that. So far, we've discovered more than a million asteroids, including 95 percent of the asteroids that are greater than one kilometer and that could come close to the Earth.

Once we discover an asteroid, we project its motion into the future to assess the possibility of an impact with Earth. We have a scale called Torino scale that helps us rank the risk coming from each asteroid. It goes from zero, which is lowest risk, to 10, which is highest risk. And the good news is that for all the asteroids that we've discovered so far, the Torino scale is zero — so, lowest risk for the next hundred years.

So, is NASA aware of any Earth-threatening asteroids? No. But we will keep searching the skies just in case.

*NASA.gov 2021*