

Traveler's Guide to the Galaxy

Vol. 001

Hazards of the Void

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*Necromancers
of the Northwest*

STARFINDER
COMPATIBLE



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Introduction

Space is a dangerous place, full of all manner of enemies and monsters. Apart from these obvious foes, however, intrepid space explorers also must face the challenges of their environment, including natural phenomenon and dangerous hazards. This book includes several examples of dangers that every spacefarer should be aware of, and these hazards are certain to spice up any space flight. From asteroids and comets to black holes and swirling debris fields, this manual has everything you need to know about the basic dangers you encounter in space and how to best take advantage of them.

New Space Hazards

The following section outlines a variety of new hazards that can typically be found in the vacuum of space. They are presented in alphabetical order.

Asteroids

Commonly found in asteroid fields, the term “asteroid” refers to any large block of rocky material found in space. These drifting stones can range in size from very small and unlikely to have any impact on a spacecraft, to very large and capable of smashing a battleship flat or providing space for a carrier to land. For the purposes of space combat, asteroids come in three different sizes: small, standard, and large, with the effects of each size of asteroid described below. Regardless of an asteroid’s size, it can generally be destroyed with sufficient weapons fire. When a standard or large asteroid is destroyed, there is a 50% chance that it splits into 1d2 fragments that count as asteroids of 1 size category smaller. Asteroids drift through space along a set trajectory, moving a number of hexes along that trajectory each round. Damage dealt to an asteroid by weapons fire or collision can alter an asteroid’s trajectory, if it does not destroy the asteroid. When an asteroid’s trajectory is altered in this way, it changes course, moving in the direction opposite the source of the damage. An asteroid colliding with another body (such as a ship) has an impact on that body, as described below. A successful Piloting check allows a ship to maneuver to avoid this disaster.

Small Asteroid: A small asteroid travels at a speed of 5 hexes per round and is the same size as Small spacecraft. If travelling between 2 starships, a small asteroid grants cover to each ship, imposing a -4 penalty on attack rolls made with weapons that intersect the asteroid. A ship struck by a small asteroid must succeed on a DC 20 Piloting check or take 6d6 points of damage and be pushed 1 hex in a random direction from the force of the collision. A small asteroid has 50 hit points, and AC 10 and TL 10.

Standard Asteroid: A standard asteroid is larger than all but the largest ships and is a Colossal space object. A standard asteroid moves at a rate of 4 hexes per turn, and if it collides with a ship, it deals 2d10 x 10 points of damage to the vessel. A successful DC 20 Piloting check reduces this damage by half, while a successful DC 25 Piloting check negates it entirely. A standard asteroid largely obscures objects behind it, and attacks made against ships sheltering behind the asteroid suffer a -8 penalty. A large asteroid has AC 5 and TL 5 and 500 hit points

Large Asteroid: Far larger than most spacecraft, and sometimes even rivaling the size of planets, these huge chunks of rocky matter move slowly through space at 3 hexes per turn. A ship that collides with such an asteroid is likely to be instantly destroyed, suffering 10d10 x 10 points of damage. Fortunately, avoiding a collision is a fairly simple matter due to the asteroid’s large size and slow speed; a successful DC 20 Piloting check negates this damage. Further, a successful DC 30 Piloting check is sufficient to land on the asteroid, granting the ship total cover against all attacks originating from any face of the asteroid other than the one they are on. An asteroid of this size blocks all forms of normal attack, making attack rolls passing through the asteroid impossible. A large asteroid has AC 0 and TL 0 and has 1d10 x 1,000 hit points.

Ice Spheres: In the outer ring of many solar systems are belts of frozen spheres of water and other compounds, forming massive blocks of floating ice and dust. These ice spheres function similarly to asteroids, but their liquid or gassy cores causes them to explode in a shower of ice and superheated gas when destroyed, dealing damage as though they had struck a ship to all ships within 1 hex of the ice sphere. A successful Piloting check against the DC to avoid taking damage from the asteroid reduces or negates this damage, as appropriate for the size of the ice sphere.

Asteroids and Planets: While generally encountered in space, an asteroid can have a terrific effect on a planet. Small asteroids invariably burn up and are destroyed in the passing through the planet’s atmosphere, never having a chance to make contact with the surface. However, standard-sized asteroids usually reach the surface in the form of a meteor, striking the ground and exploding for 10d6 points of damage in a radius determined by the size of the asteroid; roll 1d10 and multiply by 10 to get the blast radius in feet. These events are easily predictable by modern astronomy, and on populated worlds, the meteor is usually destroyed before it can hit a major population center or landmark, meaning that usually these landfalls only happen in the wilderness. A large asteroid colliding with a planet has catastrophic consequences, leveling cities, reshaping continents, and hurling such dust into the air as to render a planet dark and lifeless for decades. Luckily, such occurrences are exceedingly rare, and are almost never a surprise. Generally, worlds come together in the face of such a crisis in order to defeat the asteroid. Corporeal entities hit by such a strike die instantly or are destroyed, and many others will likely perish in the fallout.

Black Holes

Black holes are powerful gravitational phenomena left in the wake of a star’s death. These extremely powerful space phenomena will eventually crush anything that comes into contact with it. In addition to smashing starships, stars, planets, and anything else that comes close to the singularity, these anomalies create gravitational riptides and cause time dilation. The effects of a black hole on a starship vary based on distance. Ships that come into direct contact with the singularity are instantly destroyed. Though there are theories purporting that black holes have some connection with worm holes, and that they contain exits into other realities, these theories are completely unproven. Ships in the event horizon of the black hole are caught in its gravity, and their speed



is halved. Additionally, each turn there is a 50% chance of a temporal anomaly, which causes a ship to become stuck in time. While stuck in time, the ship and its crew are unable to take actions. They cease to age and any localized effect ceases to function. For example a spell with a limited duration would not elapse. External stimuli can still affect the ship and its crew, but such effects have a 50% chance of dislodging the ship from the time dilation effect.

Comets

Similar in many ways to an asteroid, a comet is a chunk of material traveling at high speeds through space, leaving a trail of dust, ice, and gas behind it as does so. Unlike asteroids, comets are not usually found in a belt of similar objects, but rather rotate around stars in locked orbits, or in the cases of comets in stellar nurseries, they might pass between stars or get caught in the gravity wells of certain super-massive planets. A comet functions in many ways like a standard asteroid, but is much faster and more destructive. A comet moves at a speed of 10 hexes along a predetermined trajectory; like an asteroid, a comet can be moved to a new trajectory by damaging it. The comet leaves behind a trail of icy vapor and dust in the 6 hexes immediately behind the hex containing the comet. These trails often contain valuable minerals, but can be dangerous to explore. A ship in the tail of a comet suffers 3d8 points of damage each round, as it is battered by icy debris; however, attacks made by both the ship and against the ship have a 50% miss chance due to the concealment granted by the comet's tail. An object struck by the comet itself, however, suffers 3d10 x 10 points of damage, and, unless destroyed, alters the comet's trajectory as though

it had been damaged. This damage can be reduced with a successful Piloting check. The DC for this check is 15, and success reduces the number of d10s used in calculating the damage by 1. For every 10 by which the DC is beaten, the number of d10s is further reduced by 1, with a successful DC 35 check negating the damage entirely. A comet has AC 12 and TL 12 and 200 hit points.

Comets and Planets: A comet strike is a terrible and powerful event, even though comets are smaller than many asteroids their high speeds can still cause terrific impacts. Within a 100-foot- radius area of the comet strike creatures and objects suffer 3d10x10x10 points of damage meanwhile creatures and objects out to a 1-mile radius suffer 3d10 points of damage. A comet striking into a watery area can cause tidal waves and flooding, while a comet striking an earthen area kicks dust into the air, which lowers the light level of the whole planet by 1 step for 1d4 weeks.

Electromagnetic Storms

Formed by the interaction of a planet's natural magnetic fields with some other force, such as cosmic rays, solar activity, or even the passage of moons, these arcing storms of colorful light and highly charged particles rage across space. These storms are dangerous for anything encountering them, but are especially troubling for starships and other advanced technological works. Thankfully, these storms tend to be short-lived, lasting at most for a few hours. These storms are highly variable in size, and can range from a single hex to a massive storm that covers whole systems. An electromagnetic (EM) storm is easy to locate, as areas where the storm is

present are filled with bright lights and crackling lightning. These forces are highly dangerous and unstable, and any ship in a hex filled with an EM storm must succeed on an Engineering check or the ship's shields immediately stop functioning, being reduced to 0. A ship without shields that begins its turn in a hex filled with an EM storm suffers 5d6 points of damage. Additionally, a successful Computers check must be made each round, or a randomly determined system ceases to function for 1d4 rounds. The difficulty of these Computers and Engineering checks is determined by the severity of the storm. A minor storm requires DC 15 checks, a moderate storm requires DC 20 checks, and a severe storm requires DC 30 checks. Electromagnetic storms also tend to fluctuate and move. At the end of each round, there is a 50% chance that the storm moves to a random adjacent hex. A hex of EM storm which is 3 hexes from where it started and which is not connected to any adjacent hex of EM storm dissipates and ceases to exist.

EM Storms on Planets: EM storms frequently happen on planets, but are usually confined to the atmosphere of gas giants and other worlds with a lot of extreme magnetism. While lightning strikes and extreme weather often accompany these storms, the main effect characters on the ground are likely to notice to make an EM storm distinct from a regular storm is that technological items cease functioning during the storm. Nonmagical technological items simply do not function correctly during a storm, though simple mechanical devices that do not use extensive electronics, such as a firearm or gas-powered automobile, continue to function normally as do magical items of all kinds. Mages report these storms also have a subtle effect on their spells. Whenever a spell is cast during an EM storm, the caster rolls 1d4; if the result is an odd number, he adds it to his effective caster level for this spell, but if it is even, he subtracts it from his effective caster level for this spell (minimum 1). On planets, EM storms cover tens or hundreds of miles, and can last for anywhere from 1 minute to 10 hours or more.

Gravitational Riptides

Caused by the passing of stars, black holes, white holes, novas, supernovas, and even the passing of large planets, gravitational riptides are mobile streams of gravity that produces currents in space, dragging things about and making it difficult to maneuver. Riptides have various widths, generally from 1 hex wide to 10 hexes wide, though they could potentially be any size. Gravitational riptides have a direction. A ship that begins its turn within the gravitational riptide is moved 1d4 hexes in the direction the riptide is moving. Moving along the gravitation riptide functions normally if the ship moves in the direction of the riptide; if the ship moves another direction, but not opposite to the riptide, its speed is reduced by 2. A ship moving against the rip tide moves at 4 hexes slower. Smaller objects such as missiles and drones are affected more powerfully, and these penalties are doubled.

Stellar Explosions

A nova or supernova has enough destructive power to wipe out solar systems without a trace, let alone the average starship or unfortunate space explorer. However, these events don't happen without warning. A stellar explosion is preceded by measurable solar activity and can provide enough warning to evacuate entire systems of people weeks in advance. Once a star begins heading down the path to explosion, there is a chance that the star can be detected with a successful Physical Science check (DC 40) by a character with a sufficiently powerful telescope or whose starship passes close by. Each day that passes, the DC to discover the star is going critical is reduced by 5. Once a star begins this path, it explodes 2d20 days after it becomes detectable.

Stellar Explosions and Planets: Stellar explosions spell the doom of any nearby planet, as it is completely annihilated by the tremendous energy of the star. The destruction of a star can have consequences far outreaching the borders of its own solar system, however, raising radiation levels for light-years in all directions and causing gravitational riptides that can accelerate planets or move them out of alignment.



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Perils Between the Stars!

Everyone knows that space is a dangerous place: there are strange alien species that don't play well with others, space pirates and other ne'er do wells that chose a life in the stars to get away from the restrictions of society, and a whole lot more. But while much of the focus on the dangers of space travel tends to be on those you encounter, the cosmos is full of all kinds of strange anomalies and hazards that aren't found planetside. This book presents information on a wide variety of dangers unique to the void of space, such as asteroids, black holes, electromagnetic storms, gravitational riptides, and even stellar explosions.

The *Traveler's Guide to the Galaxy* series is devoted to bringing you the latest and greatest news from the fringes of the galaxy. Whether it's reports of new alien civilizations that we've only just made contact with, or detailed profiles of flora and fauna from the corners of the galaxy, or gazetteers of whole new worlds just waiting to be explored, if you want to expand your horizons and chart a course for adventure, look no further than the *Traveler's Guide to the Galaxy*.



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