

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

Volume 153, No. 17, April 25, 1998

This Week

- 260 Dust Disks Hint at Baby Solar Systems
Ron Cowen
- 261 X-ray flashes illuminate general relativity
Ivars Peterson
- 261 Birds' eggs started to thin long before DDT
Susan Milius
- 262 Butterfly may use flowery stepping-stones
Mari N. Jensen
- 262 Ulcer bacterium's drug resistance unmasked
Nathan Seppa
- 263 Cold viruses enter cells without knocking
Corinna Wu
- 263 Stress hormone may speed up brain aging
Bruce Bower
- 263 My mother, the clone?
John Travis

Articles

- 265 Scooping Up a Chunk of Mars
Fresh samples from the Red Planet
Ron Cowen
- 268 The Name Game
Young kids grasp new words
with intriguing dexterity
Bruce Bower

Letters

Not-so-benign force?

"Not-So-Deadly Force" (SN: 3/7/98, p. 156) made pretty depressing reading. The development of Third Reich technology for use in the suppression of unarmed and defenseless civilians guilty only of the crime of public dissent may, just may, be one of the reasons an alarming number of people have begun to despise "science" and "scientists."

*Edward H. Clark
New Orleans, La.*

I was disappointed that your article claimed that a laser, designed to dazzle a person in broad daylight, is completely harmless. A dazzle laser may be less harmful than

CORRECTION

"Red glimmer reveals most distant galaxy" (SN: 3/21/98, p. 182) states that a redshift of 5 stretches wavelengths of light by a factor of 5. The light is stretched by a factor of 6.

a bullet, but it can have a permanent, detrimental effect on a person's eyesight.

The damage may be painless, and you may not notice it after just one exposure, but it is permanent and cumulative. People who carelessly play with lasers sometimes don't realize that their eyesight is impaired until after many exposures, when they notice that they can no longer read small print or see fine details.

Instead of saying that the laser dazzler is harmless, you should have said—as you said of some of the other weapons described in the article—that it is substantially less harmful than other means of controlling a violent person.

*Jim Large
Pittsburgh, Pa.*

Both the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the American National Standards Institute, a private, nonprofit organization that administers and coordinates the private sector's efforts toward voluntary standardization,

have developed eye safety standards related to lasers.

Richard J. Nelson of LE Systems, the manufacturer of the Laser Dazzler, says the device is designed to meet those eye safety standards by spreading the laser's output over a wide aperture. The radiated power in the resulting beam is below the ANSI standard for maximum permissible exposure, which itself has been set below known hazardous levels.

Nelson says the specifications and the performance of the Laser Dazzler have been, and will continue to be, reviewed by the Department of Defense, the Department of Justice, and other independent sources to ensure that the device meets all federal standards for eye safety. —S. Perkins

Send communications to:

Editor, SCIENCE NEWS
1719 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
or: scinews@sciserv.org
All letters subject to editing.

Research Notes

- 264 Biology
Punching up the activity of genes
Brain and blood vessels share cues
Manatees win some and lose some
Where have all the flowers gone?
- 271 Biomedicine
Synthetic hormone spurs girls' growth
Genetic flaw linked to breast cancer
- 271 Physics
Last of the normal mesons
A half-life for titanium
Microdrops of superfluid

Departments

- 258 Science News Books
- 259 Letters



Cover: In 2007, a spacecraft orbiting Mars will blast off on its return trip to Earth, carrying samples of rock and soil stored on the surface of the Red Planet by a previous mission. The ring-shaped device is the first stage of the craft's propulsion system.
Page 265 (Illustration: Michael Carroll)

Visit SCIENCE NEWS ONLINE for special features, columns, and references.

<http://www.sciencenews.org>