

13 XENOBIOLOGICAL AND STELLAR HAZARDS

BY PHILIP REED

In the official future rules for the *D20 Modern* roleplaying game there are two stellar hazards and two xenobiological hazards, hardly enough variety for any campaign that stretches from one end of the galaxy to the other. While I have written a few new hazards for the *Future: Datastream* subscribers, and several hazards written for *D20 System* fantasy games could be used, it's my opinion that the over-worked gamemaster running a futuristic campaign can always use more hazards to throw at his unsuspecting players.

For ease of use the stellar and xenobiological hazards presented in the future SRD are also included in this PDF. These are in addition to the 13 new hazards that are included herein.

WHAT'S REQUIRED TO USE THIS PDF?

In order to use *Future: 13 Xenobiological and Stellar Hazards* you will need the *D20 Modern* roleplaying game, published by Wizards of the Coast,

Inc., and the official future supplement, also published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.. You can find both at your favorite local game store or online at any number of roleplaying game vendors. No other Ronin Arts products are required to use this PDF.

FUTURE: DATASTREAM

As of the time of publication, Ronin Arts' *Future: Datastream* subscription service is running, introducing new material for futuristic campaigns five times each week. For more information on the *Future: Datastream*, including subscription information, please visit the official forums at www.d20projects.com.

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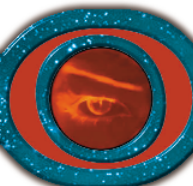
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STELLAR HAZARDS

As originally presented in the future SRD, stellar hazards were designed as a vehicle for subjecting characters and creatures to the dangers of radiation. In the interest of expanding the flexibility of stellar hazards, the following new hazards involve damaging a ship's hit points, sensors, and communications gear.

COSMIC RAYS

Cosmic rays, unlike solar flares, cannot be predicted. Consisting of subatomic particles moving at relativistic speeds, these rays can penetrate miles of solid mass (though extremely few get through the Earth's atmosphere without colliding with other atoms or molecules, effectively rendering them harmless). In space, these subatomic particles can cause severe cell damage, even genetic mutation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Philip Reed has been working professionally in the roleplaying game industry since 1995. In that time he has worked for such companies as West End Games, Privateer Press, and Steve Jackson Games. Today Philip spends his days at home running Ronin Arts, writing and designing new games, and reading whatever books interest him at the time. To learn more about Philip Reed — and Ronin Arts — please visit www.philipreed.com/php and www.roninarts.com.

An unprotected creature exposed to radiation from a cosmic ray shower is treated as “highly irradiated” for the purposes of determining the radiation's effects (see *Radiation Sickness* in the future SRD).

DARK MATTER CLOUD

Undetectable and rare, a cloud of dark matter — a type of matter that can only be seen with advanced (PL 9 or higher) equipment though its effects on gravity can be detected as early as the Information Age (PL 5) — can have devastating effects on any starship unfortunate enough to cross paths with this hazard. Dark matter clouds float seemingly aimlessly through space, rarely a concern for starships or their crews.

When a starship comes into contact with a dark matter cloud — most clouds are one tactical square in size though a few reports of larger clouds have been recorded in the past — the ship immediately suffers 4d20 points of damage as the dark matter particles come into contact with the ship's hull. After suffering damage, the pilot must make a successful Pilot check (DC 20) when leaving the affected tactical square — on a failed check the ship suffers another 4d20 points of damage as it pulls away from the cloud.

A starship equipped with sensors that makes an active sensor scan (see the Computer Use skill in the future SRD) over an area of space affected by a dark matter cloud can correctly locate the cloud's position on a successful check (DC 30). Once detected by sensors the starship can track the cloud's position for 3d4 rounds after which point the cloud must be reacquired. At PL 9 or higher the DC to detect a dark matter cloud drops to 20 (or, in campaigns featuring equipment that can see dark matter, no check is required).

DEEP SPACE WAVE

Similar to cosmic rays (see above), a deep space wave is a stream of molecule-sized particles moving rapidly through space — the source of deep space waves has yet to be discovered. When a deep space wave impacts a starship the particles rip

through the ship's hull, creating millions of molecular holes that breach the starship's hull (fine size hull breach, see *Decompression* in the future SRD).

A starship equipped with sensors that makes an active sensor scan (see the Computer Use skill in the future SRD) over an area of space affected by a deep space wave can correctly locate the wave's position on a successful check (DC 20). A deep space wave is a line 5,000 ft. wide stretching through an entire star system. A starship equipped with a particle field is immune to the effects of a deep space wave.

Unprotected characters and creatures that are exposed to radiation from a deep space wave shower are treated as "moderately irradiated" for the purposes of determining the radiation's effects (see *Radiation Sickness* in the future SRD).

ORBITAL SWARM

Around once-technologically advanced planets that have experienced an apocalyptic event, leaving them reduced to the Stone Age (or other PL below the Information Age), there is frequently a debris field littered with long-forgotten, malfunctioning satellites, spacecraft, and orbital stations. As the centuries pass, much of this debris falls to the planet's surface and is destroyed. Sometimes, though, gravitational and galactic forces act in unexpected ways to create a dense swarm of debris that continuously orbits the planet, hampering any attempts to enter or escape the planet's atmosphere.

A world surrounded by an orbital swarm requires six Pilot checks (DC 20 + 2/PL of the world before the apocalypse) anytime a starship enters or exits the planet's atmosphere. On each successful check the starship suffers 2d8 points of damage from debris; on each failed check the starship suffers 2d20 points of damage.

An orbital swarm could be cleaned up, though it would require months of work. There have been reports of weapons that can generate an orbital swarm around a planet though those reports are as yet unsubstantiated. If they were true, a military armed with such a weapon would hold a significant strategic advantage over an enemy world.

RADIO ECHO

Space, especially regions close to inhabited worlds, is overrun with radio echoes from the past. In some instances starships stumble across areas of space in which intense radio echoes have near-catastrophic effect on the starship's sensors and communications gear. A typical radio echo is a line of disruption 10,000 ft. wide that stretches completely through a star system — any starship that passes through this line of disruption suffers the adverse effects of the radio echoes.

A starship's sensors are reduced by two categories of effectiveness when inside a radio echo stream. If this reduces the sensor's category below Class I the ship effectively has no sensors until it leaves the affected area of space.

Example: A starship equipped with a Class VI sensor array is treated as possessing a Class IV when subjected to the effect of radio echoes.

Starship communications systems — excluding a drive transceiver, ansible, or any other PL 9 or higher equipment — are completely worthless when the ship enters a radio echo stream. This includes the starship's internal comm. systems.

Radio echoes can be detected with a standard active sensor scan (see the Computer Use skill in the future SRD). When encountered the starship's comm. system is filled with thousands of communications from the past, all of which are overlapping each other making it impossible to understand anything received by the ship's comm. systems.

SOLAR FLARE

Solar flares release tremendous amounts of electromagnetic energy (including harmful ultraviolet rays and X-rays), as well as highly charged protons and electrons. The effects are comparable to a radioactive blast from one hundred million billion tons of TNT (compared to the 20,000-ton equivalent blasts that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki). Fortunately, while solar flares aren't rare, they are predictable.

An unprotected creature exposed to radiation from a solar flare is treated as "severely irradiated" for the purposes of determining the radiation's effects (see *Radiation Sickness* in the future SRD).

XENOBIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

In addition to facing dangerous creatures and harsh environmental conditions, space explorers must occasionally contend with xenobiological hazards – nonsentient forms of life that are, by their very nature, menacing and dangerous without being openly adversarial.

Xenobiological hazards are treated more like traps than creatures. They have Challenge Ratings (CRs), and heroes earn experience points for surviving or overcoming them. A xenobiological hazard might be a pool of corrosive slime or a patch of mold that feeds on the warmth of nearby life forms. It's not deliberately predatory, just dangerous by nature.

Additionally, space explorers may also encounter non-living hazards (typically unusual fogs).

CORROSIVE MEMBRANE (CR 2)

These long, flesh-like strings stretch across objects, slowly growing to fill entire areas if they're left unchecked. A patch of corrosive membrane springs from the shell of a character or creature that was completely devoured by a patch of Jefferson's Root (see p. 5). This foul hazard has a symbiotic relationship with Jefferson's Root: a corrosive membrane patch shrivels up and dies within 2d6 minutes of being separated from a patch of Jefferson's Root.

A single 5-foot corrosive membrane patch deals 1d2 points of Constitution damage per round (+1 point of Constitution drain for each adjacent Jefferson's Root patch) while it devours flesh. Against wood or metal, a corrosive membrane patch deals 1d3 points of damage per round, ignoring metal's hardness but not that of wood. It does not harm stone.

An injection of sporekill or 5 or more points of cold or fire damage destroys a 5-foot corrosive membrane patch.

E-FUTURE TILES: XENOMORPH HIVE

Four of the hazards in this PDF – corrosive membrane, Jefferson's Root, space slime, and the space slime pool – are depicted in SkeletonKey Games' *e-Future Tiles: Xenomorph Hive* tile set. You can use the Xenomorph Hive tile set to create a miniatures-scale alien environment into which your players must descend, possibly to never return. To learn more about SkeletonKey Games, and their *e-Future Tiles* series – please visit www.skeletonkeygames.com or www.starbaseprime.com.

CYBERNETIC SLIME (CR 3)

This black-colored slime is a mixture of artificial and organic fluids, brought into existence when a cybernetic component is damaged and left unrepaired. One week after suffering damage, there is a 15% chance that an unrepaired cybernetic component will fill with cybernetic slime, inflicting 1 point of Constitution damage to the character for each day the problem is left untreated. A character that is completely consumed by the cybernetic slimes (and character reduced to a Constitution score of 0 or lower) is forever lost, leaving behind a 5-foot patch of cybernetic slime. Curing a character of cybernetic slime – before it kills him – requires that the damaged cybernetic component be repaired and then five successful Treat Injury checks (DC 15), each check requiring a full day during which time the victim may do nothing but rest.

When touched, a 5-foot patch of cybernetic slime deals 2d4 points of acid damage per round

while it devours flesh. On the first round of contact, the slime can be scraped off a creature (most likely destroying the scraping device), but after that it must be frozen, burned, or cut away (dealing damage to the victim as well). Against wood or metal, cybernetic slime deals 1d6 points of acid damage per round, ignoring the metal or wood's hardness.

A character with cybernetics that comes into contact with a patch of cybernetic slime must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or the character is stunned for 2d4 rounds, during which time the slime devours the character's flesh.

A patch of cybernetic slime is destroyed if it suffers 10 points of fire or electricity damage in a single attack.

ENDOTHERMIC MOLD (CR 2)

Endothermic mold feeds on warmth, siphoning heat from anything around it. A patch of endothermic mold is red-brown in color and 5 feet in diameter, and the temperature is always cold in a 30-foot radius around it. Living creatures within 5 feet take 3d6 points of nonlethal cold damage. Fire brought within 5 feet of the mold causes it to instantly double in size.

A 5-foot patch of endothermic mold is destroyed if it takes 5 or more points of cold damage.

GENE MOLD (CR 3)

This dull gray-green mold is sometimes created when a tank holding a genetic experiment – usually in a thick, liquid-like substance – is cracked and the genetic material leaks, pooling on the ground beneath the tank. If left alone for 1d6+1 days the substance begins to grow, forming a 5-foot square patch of genetic mold. If disturbed by any means (touch, wind, etc.), a patch of genetic mold releases a cloud of spores that are toxic to any character or creature that the spores come into contact with. All characters and creatures within 10 ft. of the mold must make a Reflex save (DC 20) or be subjected to Gene Fever (see box).

Fire destroys a patch of gene mold.

NEW DISEASE: GENE FEVER

This terrible disease strikes the victim's genetic structure, tearing away at the victim's very genetic identity. Gene fever is dangerous and in several systems most that are subjected to it, if the authorities learn of the sickness, are quarantined and never released from isolation.

Type: Inhaled/Contact (DC 20).

Incubation Period: 2d4+1 minutes.

Initial Damage: 1 Str and 1 Con.

Secondary Damage: 1d4 Str, 1d6+1 Con, and the victim gains 1 random mutation drawback.

GRAVITATIONAL FOG (CR 1)

This harmless looking cloud of fog, a dull gray in color, hangs suspended a few feet above the ground. Encountered only on small planets and large moons with a toxic atmosphere, a gravitational fog is a bizarre gravitational anomaly – the fog adjusts the world's gravity (if it is normal) by one step in a random direction (determine once for each fog encountered) in the squares it covers and those adjacent to it. On a low- or high-gravity world the fog shifts the affected area's gravity to normal.

A gravitational fog cannot be dissipated – high winds, artificial or natural, have no effect on the fog. The only thing that can be done is to wait for the fog to cease to exist on its own; a gravitational fog patch – most are a 20-foot cube – has a natural lifespan of only 4d6 hours.

JEFFERSON'S ROOT (CR 5)

These thick, heavy tentacles were named for the explorer that first reported their existence (and, coincidentally enough, was the first reported human to be killed by the hazardous plant-like creature). The source of Jefferson's Root is unknown, though it is known that they grow from spores that drift silently through space. Whenever

NEW CREATURE: METAL EATING SPIDER SPAWN

Metal Eating Spider Spawn (M.E.Spawn), as an anonymous mecha pilot on Xianotis 7 named them, were a terrible threat to the 7th Battalion Mecha Corps and, today, threaten the entire galaxy. During that first encounter the 7th Battalion Mecha Corps lost many of their smaller Mecha when they fell into a nest of these metal devouring vermin. Since that first encounter on Xianotis 7 the M.E. Spawn have been found on many planets. Some are said to even survive in the vacuum of space.

Metal Eating Spider Spawn are tiny eight-legged beasts that are a lustrous black or red in color. They possess a specialized gland that produces a powerful metal acid that the spawn uses to soften metal for eventual consumption.

In combat the spawn focus their attacks on metal opponents or objects, quickly moving into range to spit their acid. If an opponent resists the attack a spawn will often climb onto larger opponents and try to bite them, continuing it bit away at the target until it ceases to struggle, after which point the feast can begin.

SPECIES TRAITS:

Darkvision (Ex): Most vermin with visual sensory organs have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Devour Metal (Ex): As an attack action an M.E. Spawn may spit a powerful metal acid, hitting its target with a successful ranged touch attack (15 ft., no increment). This acid does 1d3 points of hardness damage and 2d6 acid damage to metallic objects. They may only use this attack once every three rounds.

Immunities: Vermin are immune to mind-affecting effects.

Resistance to Massive Damage (Ex): Vermin gain a +5 species bonus on Fortitude saves to negate the effects of massive damage.

M.E.Spawn; CR 1; Tiny vermin; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Mas 18; Init+3; Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; Defense 19, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +4 natural, +2 size); BAB +0; Grp -11; Atk +5 melee (1d4-3, bite); Full Atk +5 melee (1d4-3, bite); FS 2 _ ft. by 2 _ ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SQ darkvision 60 ft., devour metal, resistance to massive damage, vermin immunities; AL none; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will -1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 5, Dex 17, Con 13, Int —, Wis 9, Cha 7

Skills: Climb +11*, Hide +11, Jump +10*

Feats: Weapon Finesse(B)

Advancement: 2-3 HD (Tiny), 4-6 HD (Small)

* M.E. Spawn use their Dexterity modifier in place of their Strength for Climb and Jump checks.

the spores come into contact with a patch of space slime or a space slime pool they bond with the xenobiological hazard, rapidly sprouting until they fill the squares adjacent to the space slime or space slime pool.

Jefferson's Root lives off of organic material and at any point that they sense an organic creature passing through an adjacent square the tentacles lash out, attempting to grab their prey – the target must make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 15) or the patch of Jefferson's Root has managed to grab its victim. For purposes of holding its victim, Jefferson's Root has a Strength score of 20 and the improved grab special quality. Jefferson's Root draws its strength from space slime or space slime pools – for each patch of space slime or space slime pool adjacent to the Jefferson's Root that hazard gains a +1 bonus to grapple checks.

Each round that a victim held, the Jefferson's Root deals 1d6 points of Constitution damage while it devours flesh. Victims that are completely consumed by Jefferson's Root are transformed into a corrosive membrane patch (see p. 4).

An injection of sporekill or 15 or more points of cold or fire damage destroys a 5-foot patch Jefferson's Root.

MECHA ROT (CR 3)

While not only mecha may be subjected to this rust-like hazard, mecha rot was first encountered on Xianotis 7 by the 7th Battalion Mecha Corps (that same group of mecha that had a brutal encounter with a metal eating spider spawn (see box).

Formed naturally, mecha rot is a dark gray type of slime that latches onto metallic objects, especially vehicles, that happen to pass through a patch of the hazard.

On the first round of contact, the mecha can be scraped off a metallic object (most likely destroying the scraping device), but after that it must be frozen, burned, or cut away (dealing damage to the metallic object as well). Against metal, mecha rot pool deals 3d6 points of damage per round, ignoring the metal's hardness. Mecha rot has no effect on non-metallic materials.

A 5-foot patch of mecha rot is destroyed once it suffers a total of 20 points of fire damage.

NANITE SLIME (CR 4)

This low-powered variant of gray goo (see *Nanotechnology* in the future SRD) looks like a patch of dark brown, dripping slime. Wet and glistening, nanite slime clings to walls, ceilings, and floors in patches, growing and spreading as it consumes matter. It drops from walls and ceilings when it detects movement.

When a corpse is left alone with a patch of nanite slime the patch's size expands to fill an adjacent 5-foot square after three hours of consuming and absorbing the corpse.

Anyone touching a patch of nanite slime must make a Fortitude save (DC 20). If the save is successful that character has managed to break off contact with the nanite slime before it could do any damage. If the save fails, the nanites have gotten into the character's system – the character contracts a debilitating illness known as Gray Sickness (see box).

The only way to destroy a patch of nanite slime is through fire damage (15 points of damage per square that the slime is in size).

NEW DISEASE: GRAY SICKNESS

Contracted through contact with nanite slime, anyone that is killed by the sickness is transformed into a 5-foot patch of nanite slime. The disease may either be fought through medicine and the victim's natural immune system (following the standard rules for diseases) or the affected character may have any portions of his body that have come in contact with nanite slime amputated.

Type: Contact (DC 16).

Incubation Period: 1 day.

Initial Damage: 2 Con.

Secondary Damage: 1d6 Con.

SPACE FOG (CR 3)

This dark blue fog, most frequently encountered in abandoned orbital stations and forgotten structures on airless worlds, is a dangerous corrosive cloud that dissolves metal as quickly as it does flesh. When an area with a breathable atmosphere is suddenly breached and suffers rapid decompression, thousands of particles created from the escaping gasses of corpses left in the now airless environment collect. Dormant until the area is re-pressurized and flooded with a breathable atmosphere, those particles can lie in wait for centuries. Within a matter of seconds of coming into contact with a breathable atmosphere the particles spread throughout an area converge, forming into a patch of space fog.

A typical patch of space fog appears as a 20-foot cube. Metallic objects that are taken into a patch of space fog begin to come apart as per the following table:

XENOBIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

Size of Object	Number of Rounds Before Complete Destruction
Fine	Instantaneous
Diminutive	1 round
Tiny	2 round
Small	4 round
Medium	8 rounds
Large	16 rounds
Huge	32 rounds
Gargantuan	64 rounds
Colossal	128 rounds

An object that is removed from a patch of space fog before it is destroyed has a 75% chance that it will no longer function. The object can be restored to working condition with a successful Repair check (DC 15) after one hour of work.

Characters and creatures that enter a patch of space fog suffer 1 point of Constitution damage each round that they remain in the fog.

A patch of space fog can be dissipated using high winds, including winds created by any mechanical fans or wind generators.

SPACE SLIME (CR 4)

This sticky, translucent green slime devours flesh and organic materials on contact. Wet and sticky, it clings to walls, ceilings, and floors in patches, growing and spreading as it consumes organic matter. It drops from walls and ceilings when it detects movement (and possible food) below.

A single 5-foot square of space slime deals 1d6 points of Constitution damage per round while it devours flesh. On the first round of contact, the slime can be scraped off a creature (most likely destroying the scraping device), but after that it must be frozen, burned, or cut away (dealing damage to the victim as well). Against wood or metal, space slime deals 2d6 points of damage per round, ignoring metal's hardness but not that of wood. It does not harm stone. An injection of sporekill or 10 or more points of cold or fire damage destroys a 5-foot patch of space slime.

SPACE SLIME POOL (CR 3)

These translucent green slime pools sometimes form when a patch of space slime is left alone for an extended period of time, typically several months. A space slime pool is less hazardous than the space slime from which they derive, though they can still be dangerous to those that find themselves wading through the substance.

Space slime pools frequently float on existing pools of water, making them appear deeper than they actually are, though some massive, deep pools have been encountered in the past. A space slime pool must inflict 6 points of Constitution damage (spread amongst any number of characters or creatures) each month or else the pool will breakdown into a power-like dust. Once it becomes dust the space slime pool is completely dead and has no effect on characters or creatures.

A single 5-foot square space slime pool deals 1d4 points of Constitution damage per round while it devours flesh. On the first round of contact, the liquid slime – which is as sticky as it was when it was ordinary space slime – can be scraped off a creature (most likely destroying the scraping device), but after that it must be frozen, burned, or cut away (dealing damage to the victim as well). Against wood or metal, a space slime pool deals 2d4 points of damage per round, ignoring metal's hardness but not that of wood. It does not harm stone. An injection of sporekill or 6 or more points of cold or fire damage destroys a 5-foot patch space slime pool.

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