



Toxic dust makes life on Mars impossible: researchers

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U.S. researchers believe dust devils - swirling vortexes of debris towering several miles high - may eliminate any previous speculations of possible life on Mars.

Researchers from the University of Michigan and University of California suggest that these dust storms on Mars produce oxidants, such as peroxide, that would make the planet impossible to live on.

The scientists chased dust devils in the Arizona desert and compared them to dust devils that would be seen on Mars.

Using calculations of the dust devils on Earth, the scientists concluded that the toxic chemicals are created by static electricity generated by dust devils.

Sparks from the static electricity would break apart water and carbon dioxide molecules, allowing them to recombine into bleach-like chemicals, the research claims.

The scientists also claim that so much hydrogen peroxide is formed that the chemicals are falling to the Martian surface like snow.

The new research was announced shortly before the tenth anniversary - August 6, 1996 - of NASA's announcement of possible evidence of life on the red planet, having found fossil-like remains in a meteorite.

The study was published in the July edition of *Astrobiology*.

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