

Starlink rival 'Project Kuiper' rebrands to Amazon Leo

After several successful launches this year, Project Kuiper has its official name: Amazon Leo. It's a nod to the term Low-Earth Orbit (LEO), which refers to orbits at an altitude of 1,200 miles (2,000 kilometers) or less. That's the region where Amazon's constellation of 153 satellites orbit. The original code name referred to the Kuiper Belt, an asteroid belt in the outer solar system past Neptune.

Amazon plans to launch over 80 missions containing some 3,000 spacecraft. Leo has had six launches so far, including three launches using SpaceX Falcon 9 rockets with a total of 72 satellites on board. Amazon's main rival in this space is SpaceX's Starlink, which recently launched its 10,000th satellite.

Amazon is promising Leo will help "extend fast, reliable internet to those beyond the reach of existing networks," much like Starlink has attempted to over the past several years. Starlink (and Amazon) may be able to achieve that under the right circumstances, and addressing a lack of good internet in many areas is an admirable goal. However, launching tens of thousands of satellites into orbit could introduce some major issues, like an excessive amount of debris, increased risk of collisions in orbit, and heightened danger for manned missions.

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