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## Physics Prof Says Meteor Video Footage Is Rare



▶ [Slow Motion Video Clip](#) (Real Media) Video courtesy KGPE TV-Fresno

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Dr. Frederick Ringwald, physics professor and astronomer at California State University, Fresno, said a bright meteor, or bolide, spotted over Central California last night was not necessarily anything unusual other than the fact that a local television photographer caught brief but clear video of it.

"What a lucky break to catch that on tape," Ringwald proclaimed as he viewed a copy of the video at the [KGPE TV Ch. 47/CBS studios](#) in Fresno Thursday afternoon.

The station invited him to view the tape and provide expert commentary on it for this evening's news.

"In itself it's not a big deal, but that it was caught on tape, that's a big deal," Ringwald said.

The bright image is seen darting from the sky with parts of it breaking off.

Ch. 47 photographer Tony Kirkpatrick was interviewing a moviegoer outside the Manchester Theatre in central Fresno when he noticed the streak from the corner of his eye and turned his camera to capture a few seconds of it.

"I always shoot with both eyes open and noticed this bright light as I was shooting the interview," Kirkpatrick said.

"At first I thought it was a police helicopter conducting a search nearby but when I didn't hear the helicopter motor, I looked up to see what it was. About the same time, the theater crowd reacted to the light because it lit us up so much so I swung the camera up, still rolling, and got a little bit of it."

Ringwald noted that the cameraman was shooting in a well-lit area with streetlights visible in the picture, eliminating any view of stars in the sky.

"But you can see the meteor very clearly, meaning it was as bright as the moon," Ringwald said. He said most meteors are small, about the size of dust grains but this was probably a little bigger, such as a pebble or small rock, explaining its brightness.

Ringwald says the meteor which burned up in our atmosphere about fifty miles above the planet and was probably only the size of a marble heating up at a temperature of 5,000 degrees.

Ringwald was also interviewed by Fresno Bee reporter Louis Galvan who told him reports have come in from all over the state, testament to its unique brightness.

Associated Press reported Thursday morning that authorities said four separate meteors were visible over parts of northern and central California with reports of white, blue and red streaks in the sky.

The meteors were reported at around 10 p.m. Wednesday, said Greg Renick, a spokesman for the state Office of Emergency Services.

Renick said the odd-colored streaks were visible from "several counties" - as far north as Calaveras and Santa Barbara in the south.

AP reported that Renick said he didn't know why there would be red streaks in a meteor shower.

A spokesman said the Federal Emergency Management Agency had no information about Wednesday's sightings but said meteor showers were expected over the next several days, according to the AP report.

Ringwald said the color stems from being bright enough to activate the human eye's color vision since "the human eye goes color blind in the dark."

"But it was just a meteor," Ringwald said. "Something left over from the early years of the solar system. It's not the end of the world or Martians invading earth. It's something that happens two to three times a year somewhere in the U. S. A."

He said that the cameraman's work actually lends support to an argument against the existence of UFOs.

"These days, with all the high technology digital cameras abundant and people always shooting them, more UFO sightings would be caught on tape somewhere in the world just like this quick meteor image was," Ringwald said.

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