

'Friendly' fireball flies through plane

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A BALL of lightning roared through the passenger cabin of a Russian plane.

It flew above the heads of stunned passengers for several seconds, said the Soviet news agency Tass today.

The dramatic incident happened when an Ilyushin-18 jet flew into a storm shortly after

taking-off from the Black Sea town of Sochi.

"Suddenly, at a height of 1200 yards a fireball—about four-inches in diameter, appeared on the fuselage in front of the crew's cockpit," said Tass.

"It disappeared with a deafening noise, but re-

emerged several seconds later in the passenger's lounge, after piercing in an uncanny way through the air-tight metal wall.

"The fireball slowly flew about the heads of the stunned passengers. In the tail section of the airliner it divided into two glowing

crescents which then joined together again and left the plane almost noiselessly," the report said.

The pilots immediately turned the plane and landed it safely at Sochi's. No one was injured, but radar equipment aboard was damaged.

While repairing equipment

mechanics discovered two holes—one in the fuselage and another in the tail section—through which the lightning entered and left the plane, Tass said.

The lightning, which Tass called a "visiting fireball," left no traces on the inside of the plane.

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