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Mysterious-Light, Many Report Mysterious Light

By The Associated Press

People scattered over much of the eastern United States reported a mysterious light in the night sky, and residents of Kentucky said they heard a boom and felt their houses shake.

The phenomenon late Tuesday coincided with the Perseid meteor shower, an annual occurrence lasting several days.

"I glanced up into the sky at about 10:15 p.m., and I saw this white object spiraling. At first, I thought it was an airplane or something," said Edward J. Uiszkowski of Vestal, N.Y. "It looked like a bunch of fireworks followed by a white cloud."

There were similar reports in other parts of the East. Robert Gribble, a spokesman for the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, said he received more than 100 calls from a region bounded by Michigan, Maine, South Carolina and Louisiana.

"Some people said they saw a great big ball of fire," said Clark County, Ky., Deputy Sheriff Larry Lawson. "The people said their homes shook and windows vibrated as if there had been an explosion or earthquake, but it was just for just a very few seconds. They said the whole sky lit up.

"It sounded like a gun going off right over the house," said Ethel Thompson of the Flannigan Station Road area of Clark County, near Winchester in Kentucky's Bluegrass country. She said most residents along the road went outside to see what had happened.

"My father, brother and uncle were outside and said they saw just a bright flash, a white flash about ground level. My dad said he thought it sounded like dynamite real close," said Judy Keesee.

"It was like a lightning flash through the window," said Flannigan Station Road resident Albert Young. "We felt it on our house. Our neighbors had flashlights looking at their house. They thought something had hit their house."

Clark County deputies planned to search the area to see if the lights and tremors were caused by a meteorite impact, said Sheriff Gary Lawson.

Sgt. George Wallace, a public affairs officer for the Strategic Air Command at Omaha, Neb., said there were no B-52 bombers, which could produce a sonic boom, flying over the area at the time.

Weather specialist Dick Hathaway of the Columbus, Ohio, office of the National Weather Service said he believed the light, which appeared blue-green in the northern sky, was caused by a controlled release of barium gas from a satellite that was being tested. Such releases are used in research on the upper atmosphere.

But workers at Cape Canaveral, Fla., the North American Aerospace Defense Command in Colorado Springs, Colo., and the NASA facility at Wallups Island, Va., all confirmed there were no launches Tuesday.

"It would probably be associated with the meteor showers," said a NORAD worker who declined to give his name.

"It was like three lights at once, red, green, and white. It was flashing on and off," said Tim Jones, an air traffic controller at Syracuse, N.Y., airport who said he watched for about 45 minutes as lights periodically hovered and veered randomly.

Jones said something coinciding with the lights registered on the airport's primary radar, which is designed to ignore stationary objects.

"Personally, I do not believe it was an aircraft. The way it was behaving is unlike any aircraft I've ever seen," said Jones, a controller for four years. "It hovered. It remained stationary."

[From AP newswire. Copy courtesy of Mark A. Hall.]