

# Falling satellite blazes through Western night

*The Associated Press*

A fireball that blazed "like a string of lights" across the West, sparking scores of calls to authorities from Texas to Utah and California, was a Soviet rocket booster disintegrating in the atmosphere, the Air Force says.

It "almost looked like a sparkler going down," San Bernardino County Sheriff's Deputy Fred Wegner in Needles, Calif., said of the bright object that also was seen Wednesday night in Texas, Arizona, Nevada and Utah.

"It appeared to have a smoke trail... When we first saw it, it was so big we figured it was right here over us," Wegner said, adding it "had a couple of lights in the front and lights showered out along the tail."

"The United States' space command at Cheyenne Mountain reports that a Soviet rocket body used to launch a satellite re-entered the earth's atmosphere at 9:11 p.m. Wednesday over the western United States," said Air Force Lt. Col. Chuck Wood at the North American Defense Command in Colorado Springs, Colo.

"Ground and satellite systems all over the world had given indications that the rocket was due down this week," Wood said. The rocket was launched Sept. 5.

"It looked like 100 stars all falling together — it was moving very fast and appeared to be like a comet with bright debris falling off it," said Adrienne Berry at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas, Nev.