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# Meteorite burns up over SA skies

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A bright light flashing high in the sky travelling from the north-west to south-east at about 9 last night has been described by experts as a meteorite burning out in the upper atmosphere.

Sightings of the phenomenon were recorded from Zambia to the southern Transvaal by pilots reporting to Jan Smuts Airport.

People on the ground flooded local radio station and newspaper switchboards with calls.

Jill White from Orapa, diamond mine 240 km from Francistown in Botswana said her family watched the silent phenomenon which lasted about 30 seconds before it went down.

Leon van Rensburg, chief approach aircraft traffic controller at Jan

Smuts, said reports were received from Potgietersrus to Hoedspruit, Harare and Lusaka, which indicated the meteorite had been at "quite a height".

Some pilots picked up the meteorite on their traffic avoidance systems.

"It's the first time in my career that I have seen something as serious as this."

Astronomer Werner Kirchoff said: "Earth is continuously bombarded by minute

meteors from as small as a sandgrain (shooting stars) up to the size of Lesotho.

"They pose no danger if they do burn up in the atmosphere." A spokesman for Hartebeesthoek Satellite Tracking Station confirmed other experts' opinions.

■ Anyone who may have photographed the phenomenon is asked to contact The Star photographic desk at (011) 633-2231.