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# Quake theory on UFOs

REPORTS of UFOs in the night sky near Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory may have a more down-to-earth explanation — they may be a sign of earthquakes.

Tennant Creek, about 500km north of Alice Springs, is Australia's earthquake capital recording more than 20,000 quakes since 1966.

There have been reports from around the world of eerie airglows, large glowing domes, and lightning flashes just be-

By **GRAEME O'NEILL**,  
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fore, during or after earthquakes.

Several people in the Tennant Creek area have reported seeing orange, red and green lights in the sky during the past week, and silvery, dome-like structures.

Earthquake expert Dr Trevor Jones, of the Australian Seismological Office in Canberra, said yesterday that the Tennant Creek phenomena could not definitely be associ-

ated with earthquakes. But he cited a 1968 report by a Japanese scientist of glowing "domes" being seen around the time of a major earthquake.

The same report mentions red, orange and green lights in the sky, possibly reflected off high clouds.

Dr Jones said geologists had measured high voltages in stressed regions of the Earth's crust, possibly due to a phenomenon called the piezo-electric effect.

This may explain the problems Mr Lou Farkas, a roadhouse proprietor at Wycliffe

Wells, 127km south of Tennant Creek, has been experiencing with his EFTPOS machine.

Not long before California's destructive Loma Prieta quake in 1992, radio programs were drowned in static.

Magnetic fields associated with electrical activity may cause current surges in the sensitive microchips used in EFTPOS modems — or in modern car ignition systems.

Scientists who have studied earthquake lights also suggested strange observations by people in the Tennant Creek area since the early 1980s may

be due to ball lightning — glowing plasmas of highly charged gas leaking from the Earth's crust.

According to Mr Farkas, one of his employees, Mr Malcolm White, was driving at about 7.15pm on Monday last week when a glowing ball descended from the sky and rushed towards him, causing his car's ignition to go dead for 15 minutes.

At 6.19am on September 1, about 36 hours after Mr White's harrowing encounter, a 4.5 Richter earthquake shook the region.