

Giant ice ball different from hail

July 10 2006

An ice ball that landed in Douglasdale, South Africa, might be one of the first "megacryometeors" recorded in Africa, the Johannesburg Star said Sunday.

The ice ball, which landed on the pavement in suburban Douglasdale last week, was about the size of a microwave oven, the newspaper reported.

Professor Jesus Martinez-Frias of the Centro de Astrobiologica in Madrid told the newspaper that despite sharing many chemical characteristics with hail, ice balls are formed under clear-sky conditions.

He said that ice balls have been recorded since the 19th century.

Ice balls have the potential to damage people, buildings and cars, but no injuries were reported as a result of this one. The ball was initially believed to be a jettison of human waste from an airplane, but those reports were erroneous, the newspaper said.

Martinez-Frias told the newspaper the ice ball may be a warning of serious environmental problems.

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Citation: Giant ice ball different from hail (2006, July 10) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-07-giant-ice-ball-hail.html>

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