

News Release

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Learn about near-earth asteroids at IU Kokomo Observatory

KOKOMO, Ind. — Video images of the meteor that recently struck Russia fascinated people around the world.

Kokomo-area residents can learn more about that meteor, and other near earth asteroids, at Indiana University Kokomo’s monthly Observatory open house, from 8 to 10 p.m. Sunday, March 10.

Patrick Motl, assistant professor of physics, will begin the open house with discussion of the meteor event, and real-world efforts to protect earth from asteroids, which do not resemble what happens in movies like “Armageddon.”

“The asteroid that caused this event was recently identified as being an Apollo asteroid, a class of near earth asteroids,” he said. “I will talk about near earth asteroids, efforts to identify them and characterize their orbits, and possible mitigation strategies that don’t involve sending Bruce Willis into space.”

Those attending may see comet Panstarrs around sunset, as it recently made its closest approach to the sun, and will be a little higher above the western horizon than usual.

“The comet should be bright enough to be visible to the naked eye, though people may have trouble finding it so low in the sky, and the tree line along the horizon may block the view,” Motl said.

Jupiter and the winter hexagon are still prominent in the sky, and with Leo, Virgo and Coma Berenices rising in the sky show that spring is on its way.

The open house is free and open to the public in the Observatory, 105 E. Rebecca Lane. Free parking is available on campus.

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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