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# The Wichita Eagle

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## Local

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### Search for moon water may be visible from Earth

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by [Beccy Tanner](#) and [Courtney looney](#)  
The Wichita Eagle

For years, schoolchildren have been taught the moon is barren and dry — uninhabitable.

In just a few days, that school of thought may change when NASA scientists intentionally aim a Centaur rocket to crash into a crater at the south pole of the moon.

Scientists expect to find water, said Greg Novacek, director of the Fairmount Center for Science and Mathematics Education at Wichita State University and director of Lake Afton Public Observatory, which will be open for the event.

The crash, Novacek said, will result in a huge debris plume that should be visible to amateur astronomers.

"It's huge," Novecek said. "The chances are pretty good they will find water."

The plume may not be visible to Kansans walking their dogs at that time of the morning, Novecek said. But it may be visible through high-powered telescopes.

"I don't know if we will be able to see anything here or not, but if we do, you can get the bragging right to say, 'Yes, I was there and saw the plume when they discovered water on the moon,'" he said.

The crash is scheduled to occur at 6:30 a.m. central time Friday.

Four decades ago when U.S. astronauts first brought back lunar rocks and soil samples from the moon's surface, scientists who analyzed the materials concluded the moon was bone dry.

New findings, Novacek said, may prove differently.

Although the moon remains drier than many deserts on the planet Earth, water is believed

#### LUNAR VIEWING EVENT

What: The Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite will intentionally crash into a crater at the south pole of the moon to search for evidence of water on the moon.

Where: Lake Afton Public Observatory, about 20 miles southwest of downtown Wichita on MacArthur Road at 247th Street West

When: Friday; doors open at 5:30 a.m., viewing expected at 6 a.m.

How much: \$4; \$3 for ages 6-12; free for ages 5 and under



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to exist in small quantities.

One ton of lunar soil taken from areas which receive sunlight is expected to yield approximately 32 ounces of water, he said.

But water deposits may exist within craters on the coldest spots of the moon that never see sunlight, such as the north and south poles. Some of those craters, Novacek said, range in depth anywhere from tens of feet deep to a couple of miles.

Finding water on the moon's surface could lead to future lunar bases and serve as sources for drinking water and fuel, he said.

"If we want to put a base on the moon, the less stuff we have to take to the moon, the better," Novacek said.

Lake Afton's observatory will open at 5:45 a.m. for all interested in catching a glimpse of the debris.

The observatory has a 16-inch telescope on-hand for visitors curious about the sight, visibility allowing. If all goes as planned, the plume should be visible for about 12 minutes.

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lawwhite wrote on 10/6/2009 6:54:13 PM: Nuclear war heads at Mars?? What the heck is that about? There always has to be that one who has to prove themselves stupid.

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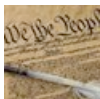
Barnie wrote on 10/4/2009 8:24:13 AM: Cool. Lets start launching nuclear war heads at mars.

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Wiseman wrote on 10/4/2009 3:01:50 AM: If there is ice on the moon, how would they know if it is H2O?

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Christopher\_Parisho wrote on 10/4/2009 2:01:07 AM: One ton of lunar soil taken from areas which receive sunlight is expected to yield approximately 32 ounces of water, he said.

But water deposits may exist within craters on the coldest spots of the moon that never see sunlight, such as the north and south poles.

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Or how about underground?

The water on the surface my only exist in shaded areas because once the sun light hits the water (or ice) it turns to vapor in the vacuum of space (no atmosphere to reform it to liquid like on earth).

But deep underground, where it makes since to build colonies to protect us from solar radiation and impacts on the surface there may exist much more water than we expect to find on the surface.

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