

Chelyabinsk Entrepreneurs Quick to Profit Off Meteor

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A picture of the meteorite fragment for sale online.

Enterprising businessmen in the Urals city of Chelyabinsk lost no time in finding a way to capitalize on the meteor strike that shook the city on Friday morning.

By early afternoon, several websites were already selling "fragments of meteorite."

Two-centimeter fragments of the celestial body that hospitalized dozens and injured hundreds more in the Urals early on Friday were being offered for 500 rubles (\$17) apiece by 2 p.m. Moscow time.

"I'm selling it because it's useless to me. There are several scratch marks, but in general it's in excellent condition," wrote one Internet user who called himself Alexei and claimed to be from Magnitogorsk in the Chelyabinsk region. A picture of the "meteorite fragment" for sale can be found in the jewelry section of Avito.ru, an online store.

Another user called Dmitry was selling a 3.7-gram scrap of the meteor that he claimed to have

found on the banks of Lake Chebarkul, where the object reportedly landed, about 60 kilometers west of Chelyabinsk. He set no minimum price for bids.

The sales come despite warnings not to touch any fragments of the meteorite. Andrei Kondrashov, a local journalist, wrote on Twitter that an official had warned him not to touch the debris.

"I called Deputy Shingarkin: He notifies the Urals that there is no radiation, but debris must not be touched. Possible toxic contamination," Kondrashov wrote.

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