

Study of meteoroid impacts to be conducted here

Study of meteoroid impacts in relation to different structural materials will be conducted here under a \$20,000 National Aeronautics and Space Administration grant.

Conducting the NASA research will be Dr. James L. Rand, assistant professor in the Aerospace Engineering Department. The grant is effective Sept. 1 for one year.

Rand said the research will be in two phases.

Employing prediction techniques used in the Apollo program, the engineer and two graduate students to be named will relate dynamic material properties to meteoroid impact.

In the second phase, hypervelocity impact data accumulated by NASA will be reduced. They will work with "target" craters produced in the laboratory by impacting materials with particles — or man-made "meteoroids" — of known size and velocity.

"With knowledge of the crater-

ing damage caused by these particles, we will try to predict the damage caused by a natural meteoroid of any size traveling at any velocity," Rand explained.

Consisting of undefined matter that orbits in the solar system, Meteoroids range in size from dust-like particles to bits the size of a grain of sand and larger. They can become visible to the human eye when the meteoroid collides with the earth's atmosphere, at which point they become meteors.

Meteors are visible as flashes of light through the incandescent heating of their plunge — averaging 25 miles per second — into the atmosphere. Fragments that survive the fiery passage and reach the earth are called meteorites.

Rand noted that statistical analysis has shown "that there is little chance of irreparable damage" to spacecraft struck by meteoroids.

The Apollo 12 lunar landing mission of 1969 was carried out

during the November Leonid meteor shower, one of the heavier annual showers. Five previous Apollo flights — 7 through 11 — coincided with less active meteor showers.

Rand is a University of Maryland graduate, six-year research engineer with the U. S. Naval Ordnance Laboratory and recipient of the General Dynamics "Excellence in Engineering Teaching" award at Texas A&M last spring.

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