

Verification of the Origins of Rotation in Thunderstorms Experiment-Southeast 2017 (VORTEX-SE_2017) High Resolution Sounding Composite Data Set

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2.0 Dataset Overview

This data set contains a composite of the highest vertical resolution (i.e. the “native resolution”) upper air sounding data from all sources for the Verification of the Origins of Rotation in Thunderstorms Experiment-Southeast 2017 (VORTEX-SE_2017) project. The composite includes 1803 soundings from all VORTEX-SE 2017 sounding systems (Colorado State University, Mississippi State University, NOAA/ATDD, Purdue University, Texas Tech University, University of Louisiana Monroe, and University of Alabama Huntsville) as well as those from the National Weather Service (Figure 1):

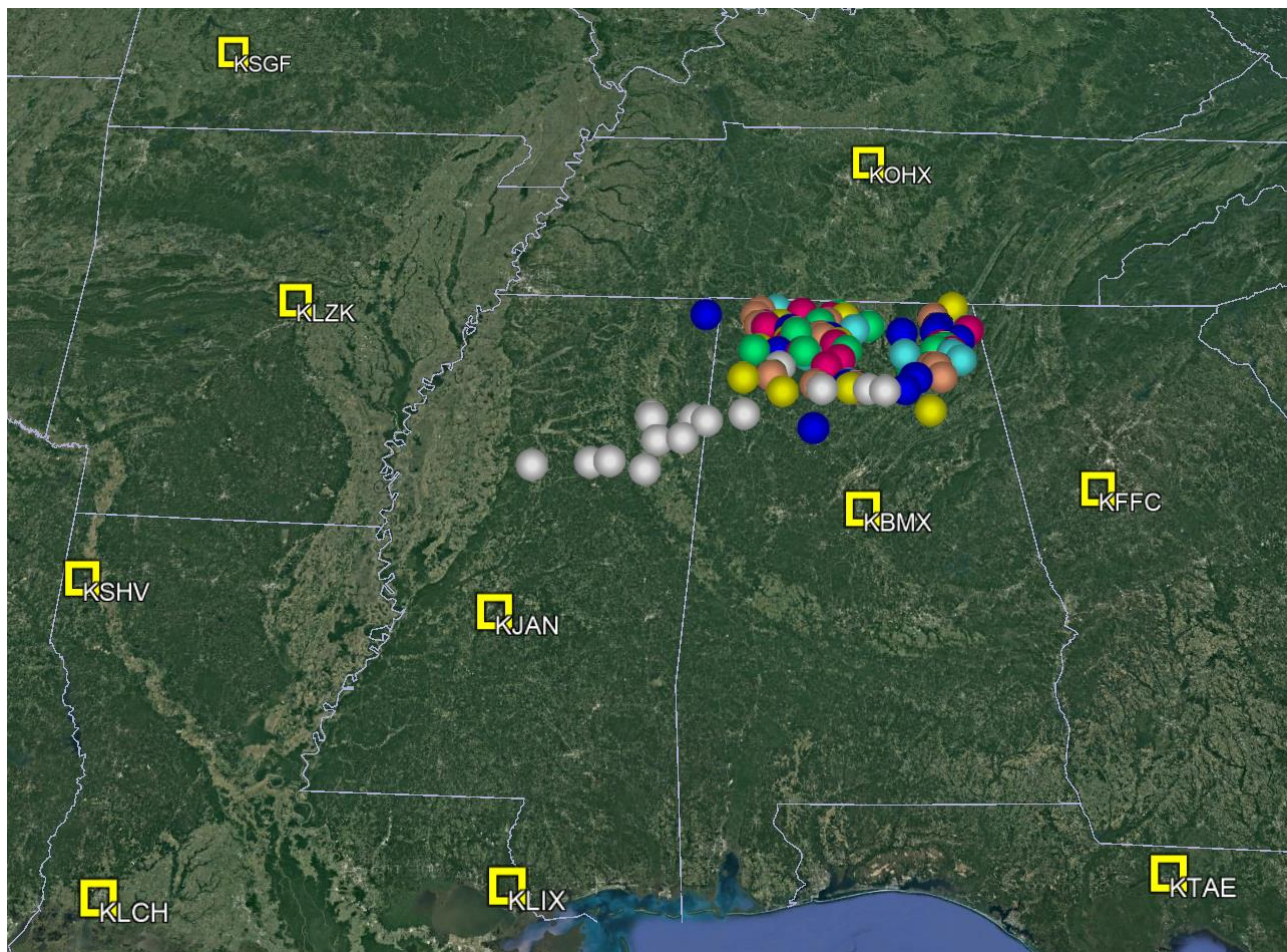


Figure 1. Locations of the soundings included in the VORTEX-SE 2017 composite data set. The NWS sites are the yellow squares. The university sites are filled circles, Purdue (pink), ULM (peach), NOAA/ATDD (dark blue), CSU (yellow), MSU (white), TTU (cyan), and UAH (green).

3.0 Project Overview

The Verification of the Origins of Rotation in Tornadoes Experiment-Southeast (VORTEX-SE) is a research program to understand how environmental factors characteristic of the southeastern United States affect the formation, intensity, structure, and path of tornadoes in this region. VORTEX-SE will also determine the best methods for communicating forecast uncertainty related to these events to the public, and evaluate public response. For the 2017 field season a large array of fixed and mobile ground instrumentation were deployed around northern Alabama from 1 March to 9 May 2017. Further information on VORTEX-SE is available at the VORTEX-SE web site at NCAR/EOL: https://www.eol.ucar.edu/field_projects/vortex-se and information on the VORTEX-SE_2017 deployments is available at the VORTEX-SE_2017 Field Catalog: http://catalog.eol.ucar.edu/vortex-se_2017.

4.0 EOL Sounding Composite (ESC) File Format Description

The ESC is a columnar ASCII format consisting of 15 header records for each sounding followed by the data records with associated data quality flags.

4.1 Header Records

The header records (15 total records) contain a variety of metadata about the sounding (i.e. location, time, radiosonde type, etc). The first five header lines contain information identifying the sounding, and have a rigidly defined form. The following 7 header lines are used for auxiliary information and comments about the sounding, and may vary from dataset to dataset. The last 3 header records contain header information for the data columns. Line 13 holds the field names, line 14 the field units, and line 15 contains dashes ('-' characters) delineating the extent of the field.

The file standard header lines are as follows:

Line	Label (padded to 35 char)	Contents
1	Data Type:	Description of the type and resolution of data
2	Project ID:	Short name for the field project
3	Release Site Type/Site ID:	Description of the release site.
4	Release Location (lon,lat,alt):	Location of the release site.
5	UTC Release Time (y,m,d,h,m,s):	Time of release.

The release location is given as:

lon (deg min), lat (deg min), lon (dec. deg), lat (dec. deg), alt (m)

Longitude in deg min is in the format: ddd mm.mm'W where ddd is the number of degrees (with leading zeros if necessary), mm.mm is the decimal number of minutes, and W represents W or E for west or east longitude, respectively. Latitude has the same format as longitude, except there are only two digits for degrees and N or S for north/south latitude.

The time of release is given as: yyyy, mm, dd, hh:nn:ss.

Where yyyy is the year, mm is the month, dd is the day of month, and hh:nn:ss are the UTC hour, minute, and second respectively.

The seven non-standard header lines may contain any label and contents. The labels are padded to 35 characters to match the standard header lines. Records for this data set include the following non-standard header lines:

Line	Label (padded to 35 char)	Contents
6	Radiosonde Type	Type of radiosonde
7	Radiosonde Serial Number	
8	Ground Station Software	

The nominal release time for these soundings is the same as the actual time.

4.2 Data Records

The data records each contain time from release, pressure, temperature, dew point, relative humidity, U and V wind components, wind speed and direction, ascent rate, balloon position data, altitude, and quality control flags (see the QC code description). Each data line contains 21 fields, separated by spaces, with a total width of 130 characters. The data are right-justified within the fields. All fields have one decimal place of precision, with the exception of latitude and longitude, which have three decimal places of precision. The contents and sizes of the 21 fields that appear in each data record are as follows:

Field	Width	Format	Parameter	Units	Missing Value
1	6	F6.1	Time since release	Seconds	9999.0
2	6	F6.1	Pressure	Millibars	9999.0
3	5	F5.1	Dry-bulb Temperature	Degrees C	999.0
4	5	F5.1	Dew Point Temperature	Degrees C	999.0
5	5	F5.1	Relative Humidity	Percent	999.0
6	6	F6.1	U Wind Comp	m/s	9999.0
7	6	F6.1	V Wind Comp	m/s	9999.0
8	5	F5.1	Wind speed	m/s	999.0
9	5	F5.1	Wind direction	Degrees	999.0
10	5	F5.1	Ascent Rate	m/s	999.0
11	8	F8.3	Longitude	Degrees	9999.0
12	7	F7.3	Latitude	Degrees	999.0
13	5	F5.1	Elevation Angle	Degrees	999.0
14	5	F5.1	Azimuth Angle	Degrees	999.0
15	7	F7.1	Altitude	Meters	99999.0
16	4	F4.1	QC for Pressure	Code	99.0
17	4	F4.1	QC for Temperature	Code	99.0
18	4	F4.1	QC for Humidity	Code	99.0
19	4	F4.1	QC for U Wind	Code	99.0
20	4	F4.1	QC for V Wind	Code	99.0
21	4	F4.1	QC for Ascent Rate	Code	99.0

Fields 16 through 21 contain the data quality flags from the NCAR/Earth Observing Laboratory (EOL) sounding quality control procedures. The data quality flags are defined as follows:

Code	Description
1.0	Checked, datum seems physically reasonable. ("GOOD")
2.0	Checked, datum seems questionable on a physical basis. ("MAYBE")
3.0	Checked, datum seems to be in error. ("BAD")
4.0	Checked, datum is interpolated. ("ESTIMATED")
9.0	Checked, datum is missing. ("MISSING")
99.0	Unchecked (QC information is "missing".) ("UNCHECKED")

4.3 Data Specifics

Details on the radiosonde systems included in this data set are included in this section. Links are included to the documentation for the individual sounding data sets for details on processing and quality control.

Colorado State University (CSU) Mobile Radiosondes

32 Vaisala RS41-SGP radiosondes (1 second vertical resolution)
http://data.eol.ucar.edu/datafile/nph-get/541.020/readme_VORTEX-SE_2017_CSU_mobile_radiosonde_ESC.pdf

Mississippi State University (MSU) Mobile Radiosondes

69 Windsond S1H2 radiosondes (1 second vertical resolution)
http://data.eol.ucar.edu/datafile/nph-get/541.032/readme_VORTEX-SE_2017_MSU_mobile_radiosonde_ESC.pdf

National Weather Service Radiosondes

1430 total radiosondes
 KBMX, KFFC, KJAN, KLZK, KOHX, KSHV, and KTAE utilized the Lockheed Martin Sippican LMS-6 Radiosonde with the capacitance RH sensor and GPS windfinding
 KLCH, KLIX, and KSGF utilized the Vaisala RS92-NGP radiosonde with twin alternatively heated Humicap capacitance RH sensors and GPS windfinding
 All at 1 second resolution
http://data.eol.ucar.edu/datafile/nph-get/541.006/readme_V-SE_2017_NWS_radiosonde.pdf

NOAA/ATDD Mobile Radiosondes

55 radiosondes at 1 second resolution
 NOAA/ATDD utilized GRAW DFM-09 radiosondes using GPS for windfinding
http://data.eol.ucar.edu/datafile/nph-get/527.007/readme_VORTEX-SE_2016_ATDD_mobile_radiosonde.pdf

Purdue University Mobile Radiosondes

18 radiosondes at 30m vertical resolution
 Purdue utilized WindSond S1H3-S radiosondes
http://data.eol.ucar.edu/datafile/nph-get/541.019/readme_VORTEX-SE_2017_Purdue_mobile_radiosonde_ESC.pdf

Texas Tech University Mobile Radiosondes

22 radiosondes at 2 second resolution
 TTU utilized Vaisala RS-92-SGPD radiosondes
http://data.eol.ucar.edu/datafile/nph-get/541.010/readme_VORTEX-SE_2017_TTU_mobile_radiosonde_ESC.pdf

University of Louisiana at Monroe Mobile Radiosondes

79 radiosondes at 5 second resolution
 ULM utilized InterMet's iMet-1-ABxn radiosondes
http://data.eol.ucar.edu/datafile/nph-get/541.023/readme_VORTEX-SE_2017_ULM_mobile_radiosonde_ESC.pdf

University of Alabama Huntsville Mobile Radiosondes

98 radiosondes at 1, 3, or 5 second resolution
 UAH utilized Windsong S1H radiosondes (36 soundings) and InterMet's iMet-1-ABxn radiosondes (62 soundings)

The data are in files by day, so all soundings for a particular day are concatenated into a single file ordered by time. The file naming convention is:

VSE-2017_yyyymmdd.cls where yyyy is the year, mm is the month, and dd is the day of the month.

4.4 Sample Data

The following is a sample of the high resolution radiosonde data in ESC format.

```
Data Type:                ULM Mobile Sounding Data/Ascending
Project ID:               VORTEX-SE_2017
Release Site Type/Site ID: Addison, AL
Release Location (lon,lat,alt): 087 10.87'W, 34 12.42'N, -87.181, 34.207, 243.0
UTC Release Time (y,m,d,h,m,s): 2017, 04, 27, 05:53:00
Radiosonde Type:         iMet-1-ABxn
Ground Station Software:  iMetOS-II software version 03.90.0C.
/
/
/
/
Nominal Release Time (y,m,d,h,m,s):2017, 04, 27, 05:53:00
Time  Press  Temp  Dewpt  RH    Ucmp  Vcmp  spd  dir  Wcmp  Lon  Lat  Ele  MixR  Alt  Qp  Qt  Qrh  Qu  Qv  QdZ
sec   mb     C     C     %    m/s   m/s   m/s  deg  m/s   deg  deg  deg  g/kg  m   code code code code code code
-----
0.0  9999.0  999.0  999.0  999.0  9999.0  9999.0  999.0  999.0  999.0  -87.181  34.207  999.0  999.0  243.0  9.0  9.0  9.0  9.0  9.0  9.0
35.0  971.4  19.3  16.9  85.8   -2.9  12.5  12.8  167.0  0.8  -87.181  34.207  999.0  999.0  272.6  99.0  99.0  99.0  99.0  99.0  99.0
40.0  968.9  19.2  16.7  85.3   -3.2  12.8  13.2  166.0  4.4  -87.181  34.207  999.0  999.0  294.4  99.0  99.0  99.0  99.0  99.0  99.0
```

4.5 Station List

Site ID	WMO ID	Site Name	State	Latitude	Longitude	Elev (m)
KBMX	72230	Birmingham	AL	33.180	-86.783	174
KFFC	72215	Peachtree City	GA	33.356	-84.567	245
KJAN	72235	Jackson	MS	32.320	-90.080	91
KLCH	72240	Lake Charles	LA	30.126	-93.217	5
KLIX	72233	Slidell	LA	30.338	-89.825	10
KLZK	72340	Little Rock	AR	34.836	-92.260	173
KOHX	72327	Nashville	TN	36.247	-86.562	180
KSGF	72440	Springfield	MO	37.236	-93.402	391
KSHV	72248	Shreveport	LA	32.452	-93.842	85
KTAE	72214	Tallahassee	FL	30.446	-84.300	53

The non-NWS data were all mobile systems with multiple release locations.

5.0 Data Quality Control Procedures

1. Each sounding was converted from its original format into the ESC format described above.
2. Each sounding was passed through a set of automated data quality checks which included basic gross limit checks as well as rate of change checks. This is further described in Section 4.1.
3. Each sounding was visually examined utilizing the NCAR/EOL XQC sounding quality control software. This is further described in Section 4.2.

5.1 Automated Data Quality Checks

This data set was passed through a set of automated data quality checks. This procedure includes both gross limit checks on all parameters as well as rate-of-change checks on temperature, pressure, and ascent rate. A version of these checks is described in Loehrer et al. (1996) and Loehrer et al. (1998).

5.1.1 Gross Limit Checks

These checks were conducted on each sounding and the data quality flags in the ESC files were adjusted as appropriate. Only the data point under examination was flagged. All checks also produced warning messages that specified the location of the problem and the severity of the issue. These warning messages were then summarized statistically and examined to determine any consistent issues.

For this data set NCAR/EOL conducted the following gross limit checks. In the table P = pressure, T = temperature, RH = relative humidity, U = U wind component, V = V wind component, B= bad, and Q = questionable.

Parameter	Check	Parameter(s) Flagged	Flag Applied
Pressure	<0 or > 1050	P	B
Altitude	< 0 or >40000	P, T, RH	Q
Temperature	< -90 or > 45	T	B
Dew Point	< -99.9 or > 33	RH	Q
	> T	T, RH	Q
Wind Speed	< 0 or > 100	U, V	Q
	> 150	U, V	B
U Wind	< 0 or > 100	U	Q
	> 150	U	B
V Wind	< 0 or > 100	V	Q
	> 150	V	B
Wind Direction	< 0 or > 360	U, V	B
Ascent Rate	< -10 or > 10	P, T, RH	Q

5.1.2 Vertical Consistency Checks

These checks were conducted on each sounding and the data quality flags in the ESC files were adjusted as appropriate. These checks were started at the surface and compared each neighboring data record. In the case of checks that ensured that the values increased/decreased as expected, only the data point under examination was flagged. However, for the other checks, all of the data points used in the examination were flagged. All items within the table are as previously defined. All checks also produced warning messages that specified the location of the problem and the severity of the issue. These warning messages were then summarized statistically and examined to determine any consistent issues.

Parameter	Check	Parameter(s) Flagged	Flag Applied
Time	Decreasing/equal	None	None.
Altitude	Decreasing/equal	P, T, RH	Q
Pressure	Increasing/equal	P, T, TH	Q
	> 1mb/s or < -1mb/s	P, T, TH	Q
	> 2mb/s or < -2mb/s	P, T, TH	B
Temperature	< -15°C/km	P, T, RH	Q
	< -30°C/km	P, T, RH	B
	> 50°C/km	P, T, RH	Q
	> 100°C/km	P, T, RH	B
Ascent Rate	> 3m/s or < -3m/s	P	Q
	> 5m/s or < -5m/s	P	B

5.2 Visual Data Quality Checks

Each sounding was visually examined using the NCAR/EOL XQC sounding data quality control software. This software allows the user to view a skew-t/log-p diagram of each sounding and apply data quality flags as appropriate. The user can zoom in on sections of soundings for detailed examination and can adjust the data quality flags for an individual point, sections of soundings, or entire soundings for each parameter individually. The software also allows the user to override the quality flags applied by the automated procedure.

5.3 Data Quality Issues of Note

See the readme files linked above for details on the data quality issues in each individual sounding data set.

The UAH Windsond soundings have wind speed oscillations of varying significance.

UAH Guntersville AL 201704052256 – winds below 615mb appear largely interpolated.

UAH Huntsville AL 201703272105 – no data from 975 to 304mb.

UAH Huntsville AL 201704032206 – bad wind values scattered throughout sounding

UAH Huntsville AL 201704052000 – bad wind values throughout sounding

UAH Huntsville AL 201704260500 – data above 273mb interpolated flagged bad, from 273-331 also likely interpolated and flagged questionable

UAH Huntsville AL 201705010000 – data above 387mb largely interpolated and flagged bad.

UAH Huntsville AL 201704282300 – RH 100% above 929mb flagged questionable.

6.0 References

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