

Verification of the Origins of Rotation in Thunderstorms Experiment-Southeast 2018 (VORTEX-SE_2018) High Resolution Sounding Composite Data Set

1.0 Contacts:

NCAR/EOL Processing and Quality Control:

Scot Loehrer (NCAR/EOL)

loehrer@ucar.edu

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 2018 (VORTEX-SE_2018) project. The composite includes 971 soundings from all VORTEX-SE 2018 sounding systems: University of Alabama Huntsville (57 soundings), University of Louisiana Monroe (25 soundings), and the National Weather Service (889 soundings) (Figure 1):

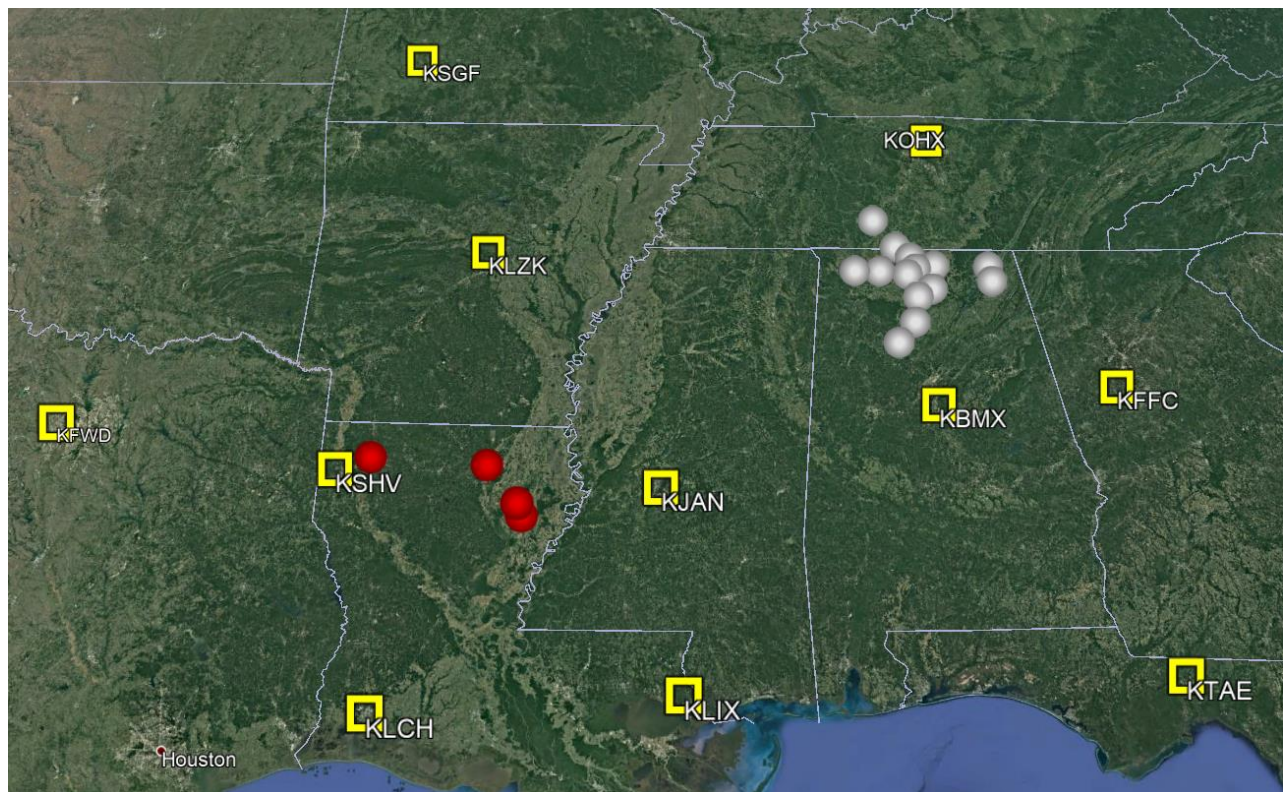


Figure 1. Locations of the soundings included in the VORTEX-SE 2018 composite data set. The NWS sites are the yellow squares, University of Alabama Huntsville are white circles, and the University of Louisiana Monroe are the red circles.

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 2018 field season a large array of fixed

and mobile ground instrumentation were deployed around northern Alabama and northern Louisiana from 9 March to 16 April 2018. 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_2018 deployments is available at the VORTEX-SE_2018 Field Catalog: http://catalog.eol.ucar.edu/vortex-se_2018.

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.

National Weather Service Radiosondes

889 total radiosondes

KBMX, KFFC, KFWD, 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

<https://doi.org/10.5065/D6PR7TSM>

University of Louisiana at Monroe Mobile Radiosondes

25 radiosondes at 5 second resolution

ULM utilized InterMet's iMet-1-ABxn radiosondes

<https://doi.org/10.5065/D6Z31XGG>

University of Alabama Huntsville Mobile Radiosondes

32 iMet-1-ABxn radiosondes at 5 second resolution

25 Windsond S1H radiosondes at 3 second resolution

<https://doi.org/10.26023/XB84-0N2D-0K0Q>

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-2018_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_2018
Release Site Type/Site ID: Gilbert, LA
Release Location (lon,lat,alt): 091 38.78°W, 32 01.44°N, -91.646, 32.024, 23.0
UTC Release Time (y,m,d,h,m,s): 2018, 04, 06, 20:33:00
Radiosonde Type: iMet-1-ABxn
Ground Station Software: iMetOS-II software version 03.90.0C.
/
/
/
/
Nominal Release Time (y,m,d,h,m,s):2018, 04, 06, 20:33:00
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 -91.646 32.024 999.0 999.0 23.0 9.0 9.0 9.0 9.0 9.0 9.0 9.0
33.0 1004.0 25.1 20.1 74.0 2.6 4.4 5.1 210.0 0.0 -91.646 32.024 999.0 999.0 23.0 3.0 3.0 3.0 99.0 99.0 99.0
38.0 1001.6 24.0 18.1 69.7 3.7 7.3 8.2 207.0 4.2 -91.646 32.024 999.0 999.0 44.0 3.0 3.0 3.0 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
KFWD	72249	Fort Worth	TX	32.835	-97.298	195
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

Original radiosonde height data were in a mix of height above ground level (AGL) and height mean sea level. For the composite data set the geopotential heights were calculated except as noted below.

Several UAH radiosondes do not reach 500mb due to frequency of releases.
Several UAH Windsond radiosondes have wind oscillations of varying significance.

UAH Falkville AL 201803192208 – no data below 923mb; heights are original MSL values

UAH Jasper AL 201804141713 – large wind oscillations, flagged bad

UAH Littleville AL 201804040226 – large wind oscillations, flagged bad

UAH Powell AL 201803191900 – sounding completely saturated; flagged questionable

UAH Somerville AL 201803191908 – no data below 546mb; heights are original MSL values

6.0 References

Loehrer, S. M., T. A. Edmands, and J. A. Moore, 1996: TOGA COARE upper-air sounding data archive: development and quality control procedures. Bull. Amer. Meteor. Soc., 77, 2651-2671. [https://doi.org/10.1175/1520-0477\(1996\)077%3C2651:TCUASD%3E2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1175/1520-0477(1996)077%3C2651:TCUASD%3E2.0.CO;2)

Loehrer, S. M., S. F. Williams, and J. A. Moore, 1998: Results from UCAR/JOSS quality control of atmospheric soundings from field projects. Preprints, Tenth Symposium on Meteorological Observations and Instrumentation, Phoenix, AZ, Amer. Meteor. Soc., 1-6.

Murphy, T. 2018. ULM Mobile Radiosonde Data. Version 1.1. UCAR/NCAR - Earth Observing Laboratory. <https://doi.org/10.5065/D6Z31XGG>. Accessed 09 Jan 2019.

Pangle, P., Wade, R. 2019. UAH Mobile Radiosonde Data. Version 1.0. UCAR/NCAR - Earth Observing Laboratory. <https://doi.org/10.26023/XB84-0N2D-0K0Q>. Accessed 18 Feb 2020.

UCAR/NCAR - Earth Observing Laboratory. 2018. National Weather Service High Resolution Radiosonde Data. Version 1.0. UCAR/NCAR - Earth Observing Laboratory. <https://doi.org/10.5065/D6PR7TSM>. Accessed 09 Jan 2019.