

What to do if you find a radiosonde (also called a weather balloon)?

Radiosondes are sophisticated instruments attached to weather balloons used around the world to obtain temperature, relative humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind speed and direction from the surface to altitudes of approximately 30 kilometers. The specially-designed balloon is filled with hydrogen or helium to enable the radiosonde to obtain accurate profiles into the upper atmosphere. The final bursting altitude of the balloon is determined by the size of the balloon; during the ascent the balloon expands as it rises due to lower pressure. Once the balloon bursts the flight package falls back to the earth, in this case where you found the package. Depending on the winds in the atmosphere the radiosonde can travel over 250 kilometers from the site where the user launched the balloon.

The radiosonde transmits data throughout the flight to a receiving system located near the launch site. This system, typically called a sounding system, processes and converts the data into meteorological messages circulated worldwide on the global weather network.

Radiosondes are deployed by our customers around the world such as the meteorological services, scientific agencies, and research organizations. In many cases our customers include on the radiosonde instructions how to dispose or return the radiosonde.

The Lockheed Martin radiosonde you have found poses no dangers to you. Please follow the directions for the return of the radiosonde if such instructions are included on the radiosonde. You are free to keep the radiosonde; please note our radiosondes have small lithium battery cells inside. If you do not want to keep the radiosonde and there are no instructions for returning the instrument, please dispose of the package in accordance with your local guidelines/regulations for electrical waste disposal. Any remaining pieces of the balloon can be disposed with household waste.