

# Italy assures no risk of satellite debris on its territory

November 10 2013

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An artist's impression of the Gravity Ocean Circulation Explorer satellite which from 2009

Italian officials assured residents Sunday the risk of debris from a defunct satellite falling on Italy overnight was now nil, scrubbing an earlier warning of "minimal" danger.

"The Italian Space Agency has excluded any impact of fragments from

the [satellite](#) on Italian territory," the Civil Protection service said in a statement.

The declaration superseded a warning it issued earlier Sunday saying it was "not yet possible to exclude the possibility, even minimal, that one or several fragments could fall on Italy" late Sunday or early Monday.

The European Space Agency said Friday that the Gravity Ocean Circulation Explorer (GOCE) research satellite would re-enter the atmosphere sometime Sunday night.

While most of it would disintegrate, a 200-kilogramme (440-pound) fragment the mass of a car engine will survive, breaking up into smaller debris that would hit the Earth's surface.

It was still unclear where the pieces would land.

Experts have said the statistical risk of humans being hit was remote.

The GOCE low-orbit research satellite was launched in 2009 to monitor gravity variations and sea levels. It ran out of fuel on October 21 after performing for twice as long as originally predicted.

It will start to disintegrate when it descends into the mesosphere, at an altitude of around 80 kilometres (50 miles).

The GOCE was built before the implementation of a 2008 international accord requiring research satellites re-entering the atmosphere at the end of their lifespan to burn up completely or have a controlled re-entry far from human habitation.

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