

# SpaceX debris discovered in Australian sheep paddock

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A charred chunk of space junk found jutting from a paddock by an Australian sheep farmer was part of one of Elon Musk's SpaceX missions, authorities confirmed Thursday.

The ethereal-looking debris, believed to have plummeted to Earth on July 9, was found last week in Dalgety—a remote area near Australia's Snowy Mountains, about five hours' drive southwest of Sydney.

"It was kind of exciting and weird all in the same way," astrophysicist Brad Tucker, who visited the site after local farmers contacted him last month, told AFP.

He said that finding the large chunk embedded in an empty field reminded him of something out of the sci-fi film "2001: A Space Odyssey".

"It's astounding to see it."

Australia's space agency confirmed the debris had come from one of Musk's missions in a statement and told locals to report any further finds to SpaceX.

"The Agency has confirmed the debris is from a SpaceX mission and continues to engage with our counterparts in the US, as well as other parts of the Commonwealth and local authorities as appropriate," an Australian Space Agency spokesman said.

Tucker said the piece was part of a trunk jettisoned by the earlier Crew-1 capsule when it re-entered Earth's atmosphere in 2021.

He said the trunk had split up on re-entry, with reports of other space junk also found at nearby properties, making more discoveries linked to the SpaceX mission likely.

Most space debris splashes down at sea but with the increase in space industries worldwide, the amount crashing to earth would likely increase, he added.

"We do have to realise that there is a likely risk it may hit in a populated area once and what that means."

Benjamin Reed, senior director of SpaceX's human spaceflight programme, told reporters during a news conference that the company was aware of the reports and "we actually have a team that's going there to check that out."

He said SpaceX was in touch with authorities including the US State Department and the Australian Space Agency adding: "The important news is, of course, that there were no injuries, no damage."

"This was all within the expected analysed space of what can happen," said Reed, though SpaceX will "always look for ways we can improve things."

Crew-1 was the second crewed flight for the Crew Dragon spacecraft. It launched from Florida in November 2020 and splashed down off the Gulf of Mexico in May 2021.

Dragon's trunk section connects the capsule with the Falcon 9 rocket on ascent. In orbit, half the trunk contains a solar array, while the other contains a radiator to release heat.

Both of these are mounted to the exterior of the trunk, which the capsule jettisons shortly before atmospheric reentry.

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