

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Vehicle Recorder Division
Washington, D.C. 20594

June 26, 2017

ADDENDUM – Electronic Devices - Passengers

Specialist's Factual Report By Sean Payne

1. EVENT SUMMARY

Location: Lockhart, TX
Date: July 30, 2016
Aircraft: Balony Kubicek BB85Z
Registration: N2469L
Operator: Heart of Texas Hot Air Balloons, LLC.
NTSB Number: DCA16MA204

2. DETAILS OF INVESTIGATION

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Vehicle Recorder Division received the following personal electronic device (PED):

Device Manufacturer/Model:	Apple iPhone 5s
IMEI Number:	013972003458400
Medical Examiner Record:	ME1

2.1. Device Description

PEDs are a category of devices comprised primarily of portable computing devices and mobile phones. Portable computing devices are typically capable of internet access, email, messaging services, and can run user-installed applications to perform specific tasks. Depending on the model, mobile phones can perform many of the same tasks as portable computing devices, plus have voice call and text messaging capabilities. PED user and system data is typically stored on non-volatile memory¹ and can be accessed through manufacturer-provided interfaces.

2.2. Data Recovery

Damage to the device in this report and the respective data recovery processes are discussed in the Personal Electronic Devices – Passengers Factual Report, which can be found in the public docket for this accident.

¹ Non-volatile memory is semiconductor memory that does not require external power for data retention.

Initially, the device discussed in this report, an Apple iPhone 5s, was found to be passcode locked. In the time after the accident, a third party company had developed a method to determine the device's passcode. The third party company evaluated the device and provided the passcode. The passcode was successfully discovered and the devices were unlocked.

3. DEVICE INVESTIGATIONS

3.1. Apple iPhone 5s

The phone produced 37 photos captured on the accident day. The device did not contain any videos recorded on the accident day. The first photo was recorded at 06:31:37 A.M. and the last photo was recorded at 07:40:07 A.M. Those images as well as the device's location information for each image are discussed in the ADDENDUM – Onboard Image Recorder, which is available in the public docket.

The device was reviewed for other electronic evidence associated with the accident flight. Deleted emails were not reviewed. Only four emails and one device cellular location were determined to be pertinent to the accident investigation. Those emails are discussed in section 4 below.

Device Location

The device recorded a GPS location² as a result of user activity at 09:55 UTC in the vicinity of a Walmart Supercenter at the address 1015 TX-80 in San Marcos, Texas.

Emails

The four emails presented below discuss the PED user's known communication with the balloon operator. All times are given in CDT.

Email 1: April 22, 2016 08:52 P.M.

Summary: The user received a ticket confirmation for a flight booked on June 11, 2016 with the accident balloon operator. The user booked two reservations at a cost of \$399 per ticket.

Email 2: June 10, 2016 08:46 P.M.

Summary: The operator canceled the flight on June 11, 2016 at 08:46 P.M. the previous night.

Quoted content:

² The GPS location was not associated with an image or video, but rather other actions by the PED user.

“Unfortunately, the forecast for the morning predicts a very low ceiling (200 – 400, going to 500-900 ft), limited visibility, and mist. So, please use the link below to reschedule your flight. Due to the unprecedented weather situation, we want you to know all expiration dates have been extended six months, with no requirement that a booking be made each month during that period. Since we are unable to control the weather, we want you to have the opportunity for a better choice of flights. Thank you very much for your patience and persistence. To reschedule your flight click here and do it yourself online.”

Email 3: June 11, 2016 08:16 A.M.

Summary: The user placed a reservation for two tickets for the accident flight (July 30, 2016).

Email 4: July 29, 2016 07:52 P.M.

Summary: The balloon operator sent a message that confirmed the flight was to be flown on July 30, 2016 (accident day).

Quoted Content:

“Subject: Heart of Texas #21052 – Pre – Fight Notice!!!

Status for SAA AM flight

Your Flight Date: July 30, 2016

Right now is 7/29/2016

Status for 7/30/2016 THE FLIGHT IS A GO!

Meeting Time: 545 AM

Meeting Location: San Marcos

Location Address: 1015 Highway 80 San Marcos, TX 78666

Location Direction Notes:...[meet in Walmart Parking Lot]

Any other questions about how this works can be answered here [link redacted]

You must be on time!!!

Comments:

Captain Skip believes it will be safe to fly in the morning, and has made a provisional “go” call; he asks that you check your email before leaving for the flight in

the morning, just in case there is a change from the current winds aloft prediction. Don't forget your voucher/certificate, don't forget your camera, don't forget the customary gratuity for your crew (retail value of flight - \$399/person), and – most of all – don't forget to have a great time. Up, up and away!"