



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Aaron McCarter
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

November 15, 2016

Subject: ERA16LA210-Pilot Statement Regarding Ground Safety and Training

From: Sean Quigley [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, November 15, 2016 10:23 AM
To: McCarter Aaron [REDACTED]
Cc: Sean Quigley [REDACTED]
Subject: Hot Air Balloon Training

Good morning Aaron,

Enclosed is an attachment of the notice which is displayed in each of our balloon trailers.

The deceased, Ryan Almeter was my crew chief and he was paid to hire, fire and train crew people. Crew persons are paid \$35 per flight except for Ryan with whom I paid \$100 per flight for those responsibilities.

Every March we attended the Great Eastern Balloon Association all day seminar in Princeton, N.J. Myself and my other pilot attended the classes for pilots and last year Ryan attended the classes for crew persons. I do not have the manuals and handouts for crew. Unfortunately, Ryan collected them, and I don't have access to them. I also believe he had You Tube training for the crew to watch.

I have always made safety our #1 consideration.

Very truly yours,

Sean Quigley

****Gloves are required at all times while handling the balloon.**

****Inflation fans are dangerous. Never move a fan while it is running. Keep spectators away from fans. Never wear loose clothing, necklaces etc. while operating a fan.**

****Always stand on the sides or UPWIND side of an inflated balloon. Never stand on the downwind side nor let spectators stand downwind. Keep feet away from underside of basket when moving it.**

****Apply weight to the balloon by putting your feet in the basket steps. If the balloon lifts off of the ground, let go immediately.**

****Do not block roads or highways when chasing the balloon. Always use the trailer strobe lights. Keep spectators off of private property in a polite manner.**

****Do not allow smoking within at least 30 feet of the balloon.**



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Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

June 6, 2017

Subject: ERA16LA210-Pilot Statement Regarding Ground Crew Safety and Training (Excerpt)

To: Aaron McCarter, NTSB From: Sean Quigley Re: Hot air balloon ground crew training and safety
Date: June 6, 2017

Dear Mr. McCarter:

Unlike the fixed-wing world where aircraft take off and land in known environments (runway length, surface condition, slope, altitude, etc.), balloon operations are specific to their operating environment. Because of this, there is no fixed syllabus or ground school for ground crew training. Most training is in the form on-the-job training and work experience, and a high value is placed on crew trained locally rather than elsewhere. A pilot invests years in grooming safety-conscious crew, and a locally seasoned crew chief for a large commercial ride balloon is an especially rare and prized safety asset.

Ryan approached me two months before the accident as an experienced professional crew chief seeking employment. I hired him to recruit, train, schedule, and lead ground crews specifically because he was pre-trained, having worked alongside and with me as a crew chief for local commercial LTA pilot [REDACTED] who trained him. With approximately 9 years and an estimated 500+ flights of local crewing experience on multiple balloon brands/sizes, Ryan was among the most experienced commercial crew chiefs in the US. Already familiar with my ride operation and flight/launch protocols, he came with [REDACTED] highest recommendation. Ryan crewed for [REDACTED] in regional 80-balloon festivals and competition flights and also helped me operate a local 30-balloon festival for several years. He had already demonstrated a mastery of ballooning knowledge, skill and safety by training and leading crews on hundreds of large commercial ride balloon flights from my launch site.

My training with Ryan consisted of on-the-job review and reinforcement and discussions in my work with him on the following subjects: personal safety, ground handling, emergency procedures, and crew roles/expectations. On each flight he became more accustomed to my flight routines and crew call of "weight on" and "weight off" during ground handling (launch and landing). As a high school teacher, Ryan was the perfect man to teach others the sport of ballooning in a safe manner. He enjoyed recruiting

young men and women to be crew people. He also kept me abreast of which crew people that he felt did well and ones that did not...

...Ballooning safety is very important to me, and I believe my accident-free flying career of 30 years and 2500+ hours speaks to my complete commitment to ballooning safety. In addition to my prior crew training (orientation, expectations/precautions, flight, etc.) I provide my crew with a copy of Gordon Schwontkowski's 220-page book "Hot Air Balloon Crewing Essentials" along with a crew safety card syllabus and a personal crew checklist. I also provide the 20-minute crew training video "Fiesta Safety: From the Ground Up" used for crew orientation at the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, the largest balloon festival in the US. I can provide any of these for review at your request.