

Co-pilot statement sent to NTSB investigator on 8/12/18

The following is Eric Empey's report of the hot air balloon flight of Cameron A-250, N2025J co-piloted by Eric Empey and Greg Taylor on August 3, 2018:

The flight launched from our normal launch site near Hartsel, Colorado at 7:17 am with surface winds approximately 4 mph and no adverse weather conditions or reports. About 5 minutes before the landing I noticed the wind speed for landing would be approximately 7-8 mph. At that time I gave additional instructions to the passengers on how to land safely including where to hold on and how to stand for landing. The balloon was making a typical landing for the wind speed (7-8 mph). After the basket had come to a complete stop and the aircraft was safely landed on the ground at 8:15 am the surface wind began to dish the envelope. At this point the envelope was already partially deflated so the decision was made to fully deflate the envelope while the basket was still upright. Knowing that the envelope can tip the basket at this point I instructed all the passengers to hold on and get low. I repeated "get low" three times to emphasize the situation. As the envelope was continuing to deflate the basket was pulled passed its tipping point very abruptly. 2 passengers from the left rear compartment fell out during this. Joyce Haskell fell first, face down, and Linda Reida fell out directly on top of Joyce with all of her weight at the same moment. After checking the passengers, I realized Joyce was in need of medical attention. Greg Taylor immediately called 911. 2 other passengers, Jason and Heather Schlenker, informed me that they were Colorado police officers. After trying to find a pulse and noticing that she stopped breathing we were instructed from the 911 operator via Greg to begin CPR. Jason started compressions and I was giving mouth to mouth until paramedics arrived. Once in the ambulance the paramedics were able to stabilize her to call Flight for Life to transport her to Penrose Hospital in Colorado Springs. Once Joyce was with the paramedics we were able to check the other passengers. Linda was complaining of a wrist injury and some scratches to her face. We, including Linda's sister, made the decision to have one of our crew members drive Linda to the same hospital Joyce was at. No other injuries were reported.