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OAS-WPR

**Date:** 4/28/2022@1630pdt

**Subject:** WPR22LA152 -Accident Balloon Registration #N866RA

**Contact:** Pilot-in-command: Susan M. Lindsey

The following is a synopsis of the conversation between the NTSB Investigator-in-charge and the pilot-in-command of N866RA.

During the accident flight, the pilot's physical position was standing in the rear of the basket. One propane tank was to her left in the rear of the basket, and one tank was to her left front, with a third tank to her right front.

During the preflight balloon inspection using a checklist, the pilot inspected the three propane tanks and the two pressure burners. She ensured that the fuel lines were tight, turned on the propane tanks and observed that there was pressure with each of the three 15-gallon propane tanks were showing full. When assessing the left rear propane tank, she looked up at the pressure gages located to her top left and the top right of the burner, which indicated that the tank was 3/4 full pressure, which she stated was normal. The left front fuel tank was the second in which she assessed and provided a fully pegged into the green pressure gage reading for both the left and right gages. She then switched to the right front tank, looked up at the pressure gages and noticed that they were both pegged in the green.

The pilot typically turns on the left rear and front right for departure, then she switches to the front left subsequently. The left pressure gage needle was 3/4 into the green and the right pressure gage needle was pegged in the green. She turned off the tank in the left rear, turned on the right front tank and the left pressure gage was pegged in the green; the right pressure gage remained pegged in the green.

They thought that the temperature was going to be warmer the morning of the accident, so they contacted Leidos. The altimeter setting was 29.78 and the surface

analysis revealed that the wind was calm. She recalled, that during flight, the winds aloft were pushing the balloon to the west-northwest. They stayed low for the first four miles, about 2,000 ft and turned about 90° southeast, and subsequently climbed up to about 4,200 ft MSL traveling northwest. During that second climb is when she noticed that the burners were not sounding the way that they should. They were not producing the power that she thought that they should. She believes that she was operating off the left front and the right front propane tanks during the anomaly. She can't recall whether she looked up at the left or right pressure gages, or the fuel tank quantities.

She decided to descend, the balloon turned to the south-southeast and she attempted to troubleshoot the issue by switching propane tanks to operate from the left rear and right front tanks. The wind pushed the balloon 90° to the west, and powerlines were a problem. At that time all tanks were open, and she flew over the corner of the building, and presumed that the balloon speed was about 8 mph.

When the pilot contacted another balloon via radio, N886RA was traveling north-northwest, the altitude was (4,100 MSL) 1,100 ft AGL and that's when the balloon turned 90° south-southeast. She believed that the N886RA was still very high in altitude, when N866RA took another 90° turn to the west, and descended. The balloon was above the powerlines, but descending, she did not want to strike the powerlines and she applied power to the burners and avoided those powerline wires. She immediately tried to land in the parking lot which is just a short distance from the initial set of wires. As soon as she crossed that initial set of wires she ripped out as much as possible and fortunately the basket missed the fence while traveling about 8 mph, but unfortunately the basket struck the ground, and the envelope contacted the powerline wires.

-No impact damage was sustained to the fuel system or the burners.

NOTHING FOLLOWS