



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	SOMONAUK, Illinois	Accident Number:	CHI85FEE02
Date & Time:	June 17, 1985, 20:15 Local	Registration:	N40532
Aircraft:	BALLOON WORKS FIREFLY AX-7	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious, 3 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

THE BALLOON COLLIDED WITH POWERLINES DURING TAKEOFF. THE WIND WAS REPORTED AS 10-15 MPH WITH GUSTS. THE OPERATION WAS CANCELED DUE TO THE WIND AFTER 6 SUCCESSFUL LAUNCHES. THE LAST PLT WAS REPORTEDLY PRESSURED TO GO BY HIS PASS'G AND A GUST OF WIND BLEW THEM INTO THE WIRES. ONE PERSON WAS THROWN FROM THE BASKET DURING THE COLLISION AND SUFFERED BROKEN BONES IN HIS ARMS AND RIBS. THE OTHER 3 HAD JUMPED AS INSTRUCTED BY THE PLT AND ESCAPED INJURY.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - ON GROUND/WATER
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF

Findings

1. (C) WEATHER EVALUATION - MISJUDGED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 2. (C) WIND INFORMATION - DISREGARDED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 3. (C) COMPENSATION FOR WIND CONDITIONS - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings

4. (C) PROPER CLIMB RATE - NOT ATTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (C) CLEARANCE - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	46, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Balloon	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	None None	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	215 hours (Total, all aircraft), 215 hours (Total, this make and model), 199 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 31 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	BALLOON WORKS	Registration:	N40532
Model/Series:	FIREFLY AX-7 FIREFLY AX	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	10090
Landing Gear Type:		Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 25, 1985 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1660 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	10 Hrs	Engines:	0 Unknown
Airframe Total Time:	2466 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	NONE
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	NONE
Registered Owner:		Rated Power:	
Operator:	RONALD W. PIERCE	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Dusk
Observation Facility, Elevation:	ARR ,706 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	130 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	19:50 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	40°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	4 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	11 knots / 15 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	260°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	22°C / 8°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	SOMONAUK , IL	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Destination:	SANDWICH , IL (C48)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	20:10 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:	0 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	0 ft / 0 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious, 2 Minor	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 3 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	41.630847,-88.680198(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Wills, Luanne

Additional Participating Persons:

Original Publish Date:

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=12876>

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The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).