



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	HOUSTON, Texas	Accident Number:	FTW96LA067
Date & Time:	November 26, 1995, 08:00 Local	Registration:	N2508E
Aircraft:	General Balloon AX-6	Aircraft Damage:	None
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious, 2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation		

Analysis

DURING LANDING FROM A COMMERCIAL AIR TOUR FLIGHT, THE BALLOON HIT A DITCH AND BOUNCED BACK INTO THE AIR. ONE PASSENGER FELL FROM THE BASKET. THE BALLOON WAS RELANDED AND DRAGGED ABOUT 50 FEET BEFORE IT WAS DEFLATED. WIND SPEED AT THE TIME OF THE OCCURRENCE WAS REPORTED BY THE PILOT TO BE 8 TO 10 KNOTS.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: FAILURE BY THE PILOT TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF THE BALLOON DURING LANDING. A FACTOR WAS UNFAVORABLE WIND.

Findings

Occurrence #1: HARD LANDING
Phase of Operation: LANDING - FLARE/TOUCHDOWN

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - UNFAVORABLE WIND
2. TERRAIN CONDITION - DITCH
3. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On November 26, 1995, at 0800 central standard time, a General Balloon Corporation AX-6, N25083, landed hard near Houston, Texas. There was no damage to the balloon and one passenger sustained serious injuries. The pilot and second passenger were not injured. The flight was a commercial air tour flight operating under Title 14 CFR Part 91. No flight plan was filed for this local area flight and weather conditions at the time were visual meteorological conditions.

According to the injured passenger, he and his wife were taking an air tour flight in the Houston area. When the balloon hit trees during landing, the injured passenger reported he fell from the basket and sustained serious back injuries.

Neither the pilot nor the operator reported the accident and knowledge about the event became known on December 13, 1995, when the injured passenger contacted the Federal Aviation Administration Flight Standards District Office, in Houston, Texas.

In a statement attached to NTSB Form 6120.1/2 (Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report) the pilot stated the following: "The wind speed had picked up to 8-10 knots. I warned the passengers that the landing was going to be hard, and to hold on. The balloon cleared a power line on approach to landing. I thought that we were going to hit a small tallow tree but I passed to the side of it. I added heat to the balloon to control decent. The balloon hit the side of a small ditch, and ricocheted back in the air around 50-75 feet. The next thing I knew was my female passenger calling me, this is when I discovered that my male passenger was hanging out of the basket by his knees. I attempted to get him back in the basket but at his suggestion, I turned my attention to the balloon. I added heat, but I wanted to keep the balloon descending, flying on further was in my opinion not an option. The balloon started to descend again and on landing again my male passenger was knocked off the basket. With his weight removed the balloon ascended again to about 30 to 40 feet and again descended, this time when it landed it stayed on the ground. After a drag of 50 feet the balloon came to rest and deflated."

In addition, the pilot said that he thought the 911 dispatchers, which were called due to his passengers serious injuries, had reported the event to the FAA so he did not notify them.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	43, 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 Unknown	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	634 hours (Total, all aircraft), 500 hours (Total, this make and model), 620 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 6 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 6 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	General Balloon	Registration:	N2508E
Model/Series:	AX-6 AX-6	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	513
Landing Gear Type:		Seats:	0
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	September 27, 1995 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1210 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	8 Hrs	Engines:	Unknown
Airframe Total Time:	330 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	BILL MURTORFF	Rated Power:	
Operator:	RAINBOW'S END BALLOON PORT	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:	RAINBOW'S END BALLOON PORT	Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:		Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:		Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Unknown	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	360°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	13°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	(NONE)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	07:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	None
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	29.860116,-95.57965(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Wiemeyer, Norman
Additional Participating Persons:	JAMES DORNAK; HOUSTON , TX
Original Publish Date:	February 14, 1996
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=19724

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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](#).