



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	RIO RANCHO, New Mexico	<b>Accident Number:</b>	FTW97LA069
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	December 22, 1996, 08:50 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N6310T
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Aerostar RX-8	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Minor
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Serious, 3 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation		

## Analysis

The pilot reported that she received a weather briefing at approximately 0610 that morning from the Albuquerque FSS. The pilot reported that the balloon flight began at 0750 with 'winds at approximately 6 knots or less.' Approximately 3 to 4 miles northwest of the launch site the pilot 'lowered the balloon to river level and drifted along at 2 to 3 miles per hour for 20 to 30 minutes.' As the balloon rose out of the river valley, the wind shifted to 210 degrees and increased to 15 to 20 MPH. The pilot stated that it took her approximately 20 minutes to locate a 'safe' landing area and by then the wind speed had increased to 20 to 25 MPH. Upon landing, the pilot 'deployed the deflation port,' but the impact was such that two passengers were 'bounced out of the basket.' One of the passengers fell forward and was seriously injured due to being 'run over' by the basket.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's inadvertent flight into high wind.

## Findings

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

Findings

1. (C) WEATHER CONDITION - HIGH WIND
2. (C) FLIGHT INTO ADVERSE WEATHER - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND

## Factual Information

On December 22, 1996, at 0850 mountain standard time, an Aerostar RX-8 hot air balloon, N6310T, was not damaged during a hard landing near Rio Rancho, New Mexico. The commercial pilot and two of the passengers were not injured; however, a third passenger sustained serious injuries. The balloon was registered to and operated by a private owner under Title 14 CFR Part 91. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the cross country commercial flight which originated from the Albuquerque Balloon Park in Albuquerque, New Mexico, approximately 60 minutes before the accident. No flight plan was filed.

The pilot reported in the NTSB Pilot/Operator Report that she received a weather briefing at approximately 0610 that morning from the Albuquerque FSS. The pilot reported that the balloon flight began at 0750 with "winds at approximately 6 knots or less." Approximately 3 to 4 miles northwest of the launch site, the pilot "lowered the balloon to river level and drifted along at 2 to 3 miles per hour for 20 to 30 minutes."

The pilot reported that as the balloon climbed from the river valley the wind shifted to 210 degrees and increased to 15 to 20 MPH. She further reported that it took her approximately 20 minutes to locate a "safe" landing area and by then the wind speed had increased to 20 to 25 MPH. Upon landing, the pilot "deployed the deflation port," but the impact was such that two passengers were "bounced out of the basket." One of the passengers fell forward and was seriously injured due to being "run over" by the basket.

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial	<b>Age:</b>	44,Female
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Unknown
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Balloon	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Unknown Unknown	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	UNK	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	568 hours (Total, all aircraft), 220 hours (Total, this make and model), 542 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 12 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Aerostar	<b>Registration:</b>	N6310T
<b>Model/Series:</b>	RX-8 RX-8	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Balloon
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	3083
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>		<b>Seats:</b>	0
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	May 1, 1996 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1600 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	37 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	Unknown
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	382 Hrs	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	
<b>ELT:</b>		<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	CHERYL MASON	<b>Rated Power:</b>	
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None
<b>Operator Does Business As:</b>		<b>Operator Designator Code:</b>	

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>		<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	
<b>Observation Time:</b>		<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Clear	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	None	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	20 knots / 25 knots	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	210°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>		<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	4°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	ALBUQUERQUE , NM (NONE)	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>		<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	07:50 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Used:</b>	0	<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	Full stop

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Minor
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	1 Serious, 2 None	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 Serious, 3 None	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	35.270401,-106.660186(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Struhsaker, James
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	WALTER P TIDMORE; ALBUQUERQUE , NM
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	August 25, 1997
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=20133">https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=20133</a>

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