



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	MOORPARK, California	Accident Number:	LAX84LA252
Date & Time:	April 7, 1984, 07:58 Local	Registration:	N3749W
Aircraft:	BALLOON WORKS FLY 7	FIRE	Aircraft Damage: Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	5 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Aerial observation		

Analysis

THE PLT REPORTED THAT AFTER COMPLETING THE 2ND FLT OF THE MORNING, HE CHANGED THE FUEL TANK & ACQUIRED NEW PASSENGERS. HE STATED THAT DURING THE 1ST 2 FLTS, THE BALLOON HAD NOT DRIFTED MORE THAN 100 YDS FROM ITS POINT OF LIFT-OFF. AS THE BALLOON ASCENDED ON THE 3RD FLT, THE WIND CONDITION CHANGED. AT ABOUT 10 FT AGL, IT BEGAN DRIFTING TOWARD NEARBY POWER LINES. AS SOON AS THE PLT REALIZED THE BALLOON WOULD NOT CLEAR THE LINES, HE GRABBED THE VENT ROPE TO RIP THE TOP; HOWEVER, THE BALLOON DRIFTED INTO THE POWER LINES. STEEL CABLES SUSPENDING THE GONDOLA TOUCHED THE POWER LINES & A SHOWER OF SPARKS DEVELOPED. ALL OCCUPANTS WERE SERIOUSLY BURNED WHEN BITS OF HOT METAL CONTACTED THEIR HEADS, NECKS & BACKS.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF

Findings

1. (C) PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - UNFAVORABLE WIND
3. (C) WEATHER EVALUATION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - HIGH OBSTRUCTION(S)
5. ABORTED TAKEOFF - DELAYED - PILOT IN COMMAND
6. (F) OBJECT - WIRE, TRANSMISSION

Occurrence #2: FIRE/EXPLOSION

Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF

Findings

7. BALLOON EQUIPMENT, SUSPENSION SYSTEM/CABLES - ARCING

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	32, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	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:	225 hours (Total, all aircraft), 225 hours (Total, this make and model), 210 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 40 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 12 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	BALLOON WORKS	Registration:	N3749W
Model/Series:	FIRE FLY 7 FIRE FLY 7	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	F7-127
Landing Gear Type:		Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	December 29, 1983 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1660 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	32 Hrs	Engines:	0 Unknown
Airframe Total Time:	32 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	STEPHEN D. WHORF	Rated Power:	
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:	HIGH TIMES HOT AIR BAL. CO.	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:	07:58 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots / 5 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	225°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	16°C / -18°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	MOORPARK , CA	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	MOREPARK , CA	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	07:55 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:	Straight-in

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	4 Serious	Aircraft Fire:	In-flight
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	5 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	35.860874,-119.459098(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Pollack, Wayne
Additional Participating Persons:	DOMINGO PINA; VAN NUYS , CA
Original Publish Date:	
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=24232

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

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](#).