



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	NAPA, California	Accident Number:	LAX90LA278
Date & Time:	August 7, 1990, 07:44 Local	Registration:	N3595M
Aircraft:	Aerostar S-66A	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious, 3 Minor, 5 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation		

Analysis

SEVENTEEN BALLOONS LAUNCHED FROM VARIOUS LOCATIONS AROUND THE NAPA VALLEY FOR LOCAL SIGHTSEEING FLIGHTS. STATEMENTS FROM PILOTS, PASSENGERS AND GROUND WITNEESES SAID THAT WHILE THE BALLOONS WERE IN NORMAL DRIFTING FLIGHT A MICROBURST LIKE CONDITION SUDDENLY OCCURRED WHICH AFFECTED ALL OF THE BALLOONS. THE WEATHER PHENOMENA ENCOUNTERED INCLUDED STRONG GUSTING SURFACE AND ALOFT WINDS IN ADDITION TO SEVERE DOWN DRAFTS. THE BALLOONS WERE RAPIDLY FORCED TOWARD THE GROUND AS THEIR GROUND SPEED INCREASED RADICALLY. THE PILOT OF SEVERAL BALLOONS. REPORTED THAT THE SHAPES OF THE BALLOON ENVELOPES WERE SEVERELY DISTORTED BY THE SUDDEN MOVEMENT OF THE AIRMASS. EIGHT OF THE 17 BALLOONS ATTEMPTED FORCED LANDINGS.FOUR BALLOONS COLLIDED WITH OBSTRUCTIONS AND THE GROUND DURING THE ATTEMPTED LANDINGS. AT THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT, A LARGE THUNDERSTORM WAS REPORTED 30 MILES TO THE NORTH.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: FLIGHT'S ENCOUNTER WITH A PROBABLE MICROBURST WEATHER PHENOMENA WITH DOWN DRAFTS AND WINDS BEYOND THE PERFORMANCE CAPABILITY OF THE BALLOON.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER

Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. (C) WEATHER CONDITION - MICROBURST/DRY

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

2. (C) AIRCRAFT PERFORMANCE, CLIMB CAPABILITY - EXCEEDED

3. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - HIGH OBSTRUCTION(S)

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	39, 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):		Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	None None	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	2289 hours (Total, all aircraft), 254 hours (Total, this make and model), 2220 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 54 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 30 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Aerostar	Registration:	N3595M
Model/Series:	S-66A S-66A	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:		Serial Number:	S66A 3032
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	0 Hrs	Engines:	Unknown
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	BALLOON ABOUT THE NAPA VALLEY	Rated Power:	
Operator:		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:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	APC	Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:	07:45 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	30 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 30000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	20 knots / 30 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	180°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	21°C / 14°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	(NONE)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	(NONE)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	07:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	

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 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious, 3 Minor, 4 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 3 Minor, 5 None	Latitude, Longitude:	38.550559,-122.150543(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Rich, Jeff

Additional Participating Persons: DAVID SMITH; SACRAMENTO, CA

Original Publish Date: November 9, 1992

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=26885>

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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](#).