



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	CHANDLER, Arizona	Accident Number:	LAX93LA296
Date & Time:	January 30, 1993, 07:45 Local	Registration:	N128TC
Aircraft:	Thunder and Colt COLT 160A	Aircraft Damage:	None
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious, 7 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Aerial observation		

Analysis

THE COMMERCIAL BALLOON PILOT WAS CONDUCTING AN AERIAL SIGHTSEEING FLIGHT WITH 7 PASSENGERS. THE WEATHER CONDITIONS WERE REPORTED BY A PASSENGER AS OVERCAST CLOUDS AND GUSTY WIND CONDITIONS. AS THE PILOT WAS PREPARING TO LAND, THE BALLOON CONTACTED THE GROUND HARD AND BOUNCED ALONG THE GROUND. THE PASSENGERS WERE THROWN INTO THE BALLOON STRUCTURE. ONE PASSENGER RECEIVED A SERIOUS ANKLE AND SPINE INJURY, REQUIRING HOSPITALIZATION. THE ACCIDENT WAS NOT REPORTED BY THE PILOT AND WAS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE FAA ABOUT 6 MONTHS AFTER THE ACCIDENT. THE PILOT DID NOT RESPOND TO ANY REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACCIDENT.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to adequately evaluate the weather conditions and subsequent uncontrolled touchdown resulting in a hard landing. Gusty wind conditions were a factor in the accident.

Findings

Occurrence #1: HARD LANDING
Phase of Operation: LANDING

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - GUSTS

2. (C) WEATHER EVALUATION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) TOUCHDOWN - UNCONTROLLED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On January 30, 1993, about 0745 hours mountain standard time, a Thunder and Colt Airborne America, Colt 160A balloon, N128TC, experienced a hard landing near Chandler, Arizona. The balloon was being operated as a visual flight rules (VFR) local area sightseeing flight under Title 14 CFR Part 91 when the accident occurred. The balloon, registered to and operated by Naturally High Balloon Co. Inc., Phoenix, Arizona, was not damaged. The certificated commercial balloon pilot and 6 passengers were not injured. One passenger received serious injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed.

An Operations Inspector, Federal Aviation Administration, Scottsdale Flight Standards District Office, reported that the accident was first reported to his office about June 1, 1993. The injured passenger indicated that during landing, the balloon was bounced along the ground by gusty wind conditions, throwing the passengers into the balloon structure. Following the landing, the injured passenger was transported to a local hospital. The passenger received an ankle and spine injury that prevented the passenger from working for the following 5 months. Medical documentation of the passenger's injuries was received by the FAA. In an interview with the FAA on June 4, 1993, the pilot indicated that he was aware that the passenger was injured; however, was unaware of the severity.

The Safety Board's Southwest Regional Office was notified of the accident by FAA personnel on July 22, 1993. On July 23, 1993, the pilot was sent a letter of investigation and a Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report, NTSB Form 6120.1/2, via certified mail. A return receipt that was received in the regional office on July 28, 1993, indicated that the pilot signed for the pilot/operator report package on July 26, 1993.

The pilot did not return the pilot/operator report. An additional letter of investigation, along with another pilot/operator report was sent to the pilot on August 27, 1993, again via certified mail. The second pilot/operator package was received, unopened, in the regional office on September 20, 1993. The U.S. Post Office indicated on the unopened package that delivery was attempted on August 30, 1993; a second notice issued on September 4, 1993; and then returned to the Safety Board on September 13, 1993, as unclaimed. No further communication was received from the pilot.

All information concerning the pilot in this report was obtained from a review of FAA records on file in the Airmen and Medical Records Center located in Oklahoma City. The pilot holds a commercial pilot certificate, issued on March 14, 1989, and limited to hot air balloons with an airborne heater. The pilot does not possess a medical certificate, nor is one required for balloon operations; however, the pilot submitted an application for a medical certificate on March 27, 1991. The FAA did not issue a medical certificate; however, the pilot noted on the application that he had accumulated 1,400 hours of aeronautical experience, of which 100

hours were accrued in the previous 6 months.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	37, 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:	1400 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Thunder and Colt	Registration:	N128TC
Model/Series:	COLT 160A COLT 160A	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	1884USA
Landing Gear Type:		Seats:	0
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	900 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	0 Unknown
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	NATURALLY HIGH BALLOON CO INC.	Rated Power:	
Operator:	NATURALLY HIGH BALLOON CO INC.	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:		Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:		Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown	Visibility	
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:		Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	00:00 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:	Full stop

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	None
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious, 6 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 7 None	Latitude, Longitude:	33.320655,-111.819351(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Erickson, Scott
Additional Participating Persons:	ROMAN BUETTNER; SCOTTSDALE ,AZ
Original Publish Date:	September 26, 1994
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=28432

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](#).