



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	PHOENIX, Arizona	Accident Number:	LAX00LA033
Date & Time:	November 13, 1999, 08:00 Local	Registration:	N4046M
Aircraft:	Raven RX-7	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious, 2 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

Liftoff and initial stages of the flight were uneventful. As the flight proceeded, the balloon approached a steep-sided mountain and the pilot initiated a climb. He realized he was not going to clear the mountain and secured the heat prior to colliding with the ground. The balloon contacted the ground near the mountain crest, turning the gondola on its side. The balloon drifted off the other side of the mountain, the pilot reapplied heat, and flew several miles before completing an uneventful landing. The gondola sustained substantial damage and one passenger suffered a fractured leg.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's delay in initiating a climb and his subsequent failure to attain and maintain clearance from mountainous terrain.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: CLIMB

Findings

1. TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
2. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

3. (C) CLIMB - DELAYED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On November 13, 1999, about 0800 hours mountain standard time, a Raven RX-7 balloon, N4046M, sustained substantial damage after colliding with mountainous terrain on Thunderbird Mountain near Phoenix, Arizona. The private pilot owned and operated the balloon under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91. The pilot and one passenger sustained minor injuries; another passenger sustained serious injuries. The personal flight departed from the juncture of Interstate 17 and Happy Valley Road about 0715. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan was filed.

The pilot stated to the Federal Aviation Administration accident coordinator that winds were calm at departure. A passenger reported the takeoff was smooth. As the flight proceeded, the balloon approached a steep mountain and the pilot initiated a climb. He realized he was not going to clear the mountain and secured the heat prior to colliding with the ground. The balloon contacted the ground near the mountain crest, turning the gondola on its side. The balloon drifted off the other side of the mountain, the pilot reapplied heat, and flew several miles before completing an uneventful landing. A child passenger suffered a broken leg, and the gondola suffered substantial damage.

The pilot failed to submit a pilot/operator report. A Safety Board form 6120.1/2 was sent certified mail and was undeliverable at the address the pilot provided.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	38, 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:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	85 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Raven	Registration:	N4046M
Model/Series:	RX-7 RX-7	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	RX7-310
Landing Gear Type:		Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	Unknown
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	KEVIN TAYLOR	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:	PHX ,1135 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	60 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	07:56 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	140°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	17°C / 4°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:		Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	07:15 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 Minor	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 2 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	33.679538,-112.090744(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Plagens, Howard
Additional Participating Persons:	MIKE BROWN; SCOTTSDALE , AZ
Original Publish Date:	May 9, 2001
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=47824

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