



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Albuquerque, New Mexico	Accident Number:	DEN03LA105
Date & Time:	June 15, 2003, 08:30 Local	Registration:	N4031Z
Aircraft:	Adams Balloon A55	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

According to the pilot he was approaching a vacant field for landing. The balloon crossed over a hot, paved parking lot, began to rotate and descended onto a live power line at the edge of the lot. The pilot attempted to recover; however, the balloon continued to sink, and the basket struck the top power line. The pilot stated "the speed at which the balloon was traveling forward was so slow that the wire brought the basket to a halt instead of snapping [the wire] in half." Subsequently, the basket slid down towards the ground. The power line came in contact with the suspension cable, "allowing electricity to run up the side of the balloon through the digital temperature wire." A fire ignited at the top when the electricity reached the sensor. The pilot stated the "pressure inside the balloon" rose, causing "a blast in the balloon that blew the top out,...draping the envelope over the live wire." Another fire erupted under the basket. The pilot and ground crew extinguished both fires.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's improper planned approach for a landing and obstacle clearance not maintained. A contributing factor was the power lines.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: DESCENT

Findings

1. (C) PLANNED APPROACH - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: LANDING

Findings

3. (F) OBJECT - WIRE, TRANSMISSION

Factual Information

On June 15, 2003, at approximately 0830 mountain daylight time, an Adams Balloon A55, N4031Z, was destroyed when it struck power lines while landing near Albuquerque International Sunport (ABQ), Albuquerque, New Mexico. The private pilot was seriously injured and his passenger received minor injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan had been filed for the local flight being operated under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 91. The flight originated from the intersection of Coors and Irving streets in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at 0700.

According to the pilot, he was approaching a vacant field on the north side of Rio Bravo Street for landing. The balloon passed over a hot, paved parking lot. Unexpectedly, the balloon rotated and descended onto a live power line at the edge of the lot. The pilot said he attempted to recover; however, the balloon continued to sink. The pilot stated the bottom third of the basket struck the top power line. The pilot said "the speed at which the balloon was traveling forward was so slow that the wire brought the basket to a halt instead of snapping [the wire] in half."

The basket stopped moving forward but the balloon envelope continued moving forward to a "45 degree angle," and then came to a stop. Subsequently, the basket slid down the power line towards the ground. The power line came in contact with the suspension cable, "allowing electricity to run up the side of the balloon through the digital temperature wire." A fire ignited at the top of the balloon envelope when the electricity reached the temperature sensor. The pilot stated the "pressure inside the balloon" rose, causing "a blast in the balloon that blew the top out,...draping the envelope over the live wire." The fire was extinguished by the crew. Another fire erupted under the basket and was extinguished by the pilot. The pilot and passenger remained in the basket, which was resting on top of the power line, until a boom truck arrived.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	44, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	
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	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Adams Balloon	Registration:	N4031Z
Model/Series:	A55	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	155
Landing Gear Type:		Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	June 1, 2002 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:	365 Hrs	Engines:	0
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	ABQ,5355 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:	08:56 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	350°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.23 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	21°C / 8°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	ALBUQUERQUE, NM (ABQ)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Albuquerque, NM (ABQ)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	07:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class D

Airport Information

Airport:	ALBUQUERQUE INTL ABQ	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	Unknown
Runway Used:		IFR Approach:	Unknown
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Unknown

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	35,-106.60028

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Struhsaker, James
Additional Participating Persons:	Brian J Iorg; Albuquerque FSDO; Albuquerque, NM
Original Publish Date:	February 5, 2004
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=57220

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