



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Shreveport, Louisiana	Accident Number:	DFW05LA125
Date & Time:	May 18, 2005, 19:10 Local	Registration:	N699WH
Aircraft:	Aerostar International Inc. S53A	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

While flying over a residential area, the balloon struck electrical power lines approximately 60 feet above ground level (agl). Subsequently, the balloon was observed by witnesses ascending to an altitude of approximately 2,000 feet, with the basket of the balloon engulfed in flames. The balloon drifted for approximately two miles before gradually descending and coming to rest in a parking lot.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to maintain clearance from electrical power lines.

Findings

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

Findings

1. OBJECT - WIRE, TRANSMISSION
 2. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

3. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

Factual Information

On May 18, 2005, approximately 1910 central daylight time, an Aerostar S53A hot-air balloon, N699WH, was substantially damaged when it collided with power lines during cruise flight near Shreveport, Louisiana. The commercial pilot and passenger were fatally injured. The balloon was registered to and operated by the pilot. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and a flight plan was not filed for the 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 personal flight. The local flight originated from a staging area at Bluebird Hill Airport (5F5) near Keithville, Louisiana, at 1835.

According to information gathered by an Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector, who responded to the accident site, the balloon was flying over a residential area when it struck electrical power lines, approximately 60 feet above ground level (agl). Subsequently, the balloon was observed by witnesses ascending to an altitude of approximately 2,000 feet, with the basket of the balloon engulfed in flames. The balloon drifted for approximately two miles before gradually descending and coming to rest in a church parking lot.

Examination of the balloon by the FAA inspector revealed that the basket was destroyed by fire, and the skirt of the balloon envelope was burnt. Debris from the balloon was found scattered between the point of initial contact with the power lines to the where the balloon came to rest.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	52, 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:	Yes
Medical Certification:	None None	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Aerostar International Inc.	Registration:	N699WH
Model/Series:	S53A	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	S53A
Landing Gear Type:	None	Seats:	0
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1800 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	0
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	William Wesley Harwell	Rated Power:	
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	SHV,258 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:	23:56 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 5500 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 28000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	180°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.84 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	29°C / 17°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Keithville, LA (5F5)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	18:35 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	In-flight
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	32.446388,-93.825553

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	McGill, C Frank
Additional Participating Persons:	Mary Donahue; Federal Aviation Administration; Baton Rouge, LA
Original Publish Date:	September 13, 2005
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=61509

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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](#).