



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	Albuquerque, New Mexico	<b>Accident Number:</b>	CEN10CA010
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	October 5, 2009, 08:02 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N9126K
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Aerostar International RX-7	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Minor
<b>Defining Event:</b>	Low altitude operation/event	<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Serious
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Air race/show		

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## Analysis

During a morning balloon competition flight the pilot was attempting to maneuver the balloon in order to drop a marker on a target. When approaching the target area the pilot said she was flying approximately 15 feet above ground level when she “burned to ascend” over a steel frame sponsor’s tent on the edge of the competition target area. The balloon cleared the rear of the tent, but the basket struck the front edge. A review of a video recording of the event shows that the impact abruptly tilted the basket more than 45 degrees. The passenger was ejected and fell approximately 30 feet to the ground. Suddenly minus the weight of the missing passenger the balloon then ascended rapidly and the pilot attempted to correct by venting. The rapid climb and the venting at the top of the balloon envelope caused the mouth of the balloon to close and the balloon then began descending rapidly. The pilot was unable to correct the descent with a burn because the closed mouth was being burned by the flames from the burner. The balloon landed hard and sustained minor damage. The passenger and pilot both sustained serious injuries.

## 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 adequate clearance from a known obstacle and the pilot’s failure to maintain control of the balloon during the sudden climb following the ejection of the passenger.

## Findings

<b>Personnel issues</b>	Monitoring environment - Pilot
<b>Environmental issues</b>	Residence/building - Response/compensation
<b>Aircraft</b>	(general) - Not attained/maintained
<b>Personnel issues</b>	Aircraft control - Pilot

## Factual Information

### History of Flight

<b>Maneuvering-low-alt flying</b>	Low altitude operation/event (Defining event)
<b>Maneuvering-low-alt flying</b>	Inflight upset
<b>Maneuvering-low-alt flying</b>	Miscellaneous/other
<b>Approach-VFR go-around</b>	Abrupt maneuver
<b>Uncontrolled descent</b>	Miscellaneous/other

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial	<b>Age:</b>	56,Female
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	April 11, 2009
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	July 18, 2008
<b>Flight Time:</b>	(Estimated) 230 hours (Total, all aircraft), 230 hours (Total, this make and model), 209 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Aerostar International	<b>Registration:</b>	N9126K
<b>Model/Series:</b>	RX-7	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Balloon
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	RX7-3326
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	N/A	<b>Seats:</b>	
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	August 22, 2009 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1480 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	5 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	0
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	192 Hrs at time of accident	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	
<b>ELT:</b>	Not installed	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	On file	<b>Rated Power:</b>	
<b>Operator:</b>	On file	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	KABQ, 5355 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	11 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	07:56 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	180°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Few / 4000 ft AGL	<b>Visibility:</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	None	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	9 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	180°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	29.88 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	15°C / 11°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	Albuquerque, NM	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>	Albuquerque, NM	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	07:55 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>	Albuquerque Intl Sunport ABQ	<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>	5355 ft msl	<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Used:</b>		<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	None

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Serious	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Minor
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	1 Serious	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	2 Serious	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	35.187221,-106.587219(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Latson, Thomas
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	Richard S Cramer; FAA Albuquerque FSDO; Albuquerque, NM
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	December 29, 2009
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB.
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=74873">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=74873</a>

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