



Aviation Investigation Final Report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Location: | Summerdale, Alabama | Accident Number: | ERA11CA353 |
| Date & Time: | June 18, 2011, 09:20 Local | Registration: | N8190V |
| Aircraft: | HEAD BALLOONS INC AX8-88 | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Defining Event: | Collision during takeoff/land | Injuries: | 2 None |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation - Personal | | |

Analysis

The pilot of the balloon reported that he elected to land in a large field after the wind speed increased during the flight. During the approach the pilot aligned the gondola to scrape along the top of a tree line adjacent to the intended landing field. He stated that, in ballooning, it is a common practice to scrape against the tops of trees on approach. The pilot allowed the balloon to descend too low during the maneuver and the balloon's "red line" became tangled in the trees which caused the envelope to deflate. The balloon then caught fire and the gondola settled to the ground as the pilot turned off the fuel. Both he and the passenger egressed the gondola safely before fire consumed the gondola.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The balloon pilot's failure to maintain proper altitude/clearance from a tree line during the landing approach.

Findings

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| Personnel issues | Incorrect action selection - Pilot |
| Environmental issues | Tree(s) - Contributed to outcome |
| Personnel issues | Monitoring environment - Pilot |

Factual Information

History of Flight

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| Approach | Collision during takeoff/land (Defining event) |
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Pilot Information

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| Certificate: | Private | Age: | 56, 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 | Last FAA Medical Exam: | |
| Occupational Pilot: | No | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | 142 hours (Total, all aircraft), 142 hours (Total, this make and model), 135 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 20 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 0 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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| Aircraft Make: | HEAD BALLOONS INC | Registration: | N8190V |
| Model/Series: | AX8-88 | Aircraft Category: | Balloon |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Normal | Serial Number: | 208 |
| Landing Gear Type: | | Seats: | 4 |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | February 1, 2011 Annual | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 600 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | | Engines: | 0 |
| Airframe Total Time: | 240 Hrs as of last inspection | 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

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|---|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual (VMC) | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | KCQF | Distance from Accident Site: | 12 Nautical Miles |
| Observation Time: | 08:15 Local | Direction from Accident Site: | 280° |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Scattered / 2100 ft AGL | Visibility | 10 miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | None | Visibility (RVR): | |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | 6 knots / | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | 230° | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | 30.07 inches Hg | Temperature/Dew Point: | 30°C / 25°C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | No Obscuration; No Precipitation | | |
| Departure Point: | Foley, AL | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | None |
| Destination: | Summerdale, AL | Type of Clearance: | None |
| Departure Time: | 07:20 Local | Type of Airspace: | |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|----------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 None | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Passenger Injuries: | 1 None | Aircraft Fire: | On-ground |
| Ground Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Explosion: | None |
| Total Injuries: | 2 None | Latitude, Longitude: | 30.483333,-88.300003(est) |

Administrative Information

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| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | Lemishko, Alexander |
| Additional Participating Persons: | Tim Inns; FAA Birmingham Alabama FSDO; Birmingham, AL |
| Original Publish Date: | November 22, 2011 |
| Last Revision Date: | |
| Investigation Class: | Class |
| Note: | This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB. |
| Investigation Docket: | https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=80857 |

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](#).