



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Albuquerque, New Mexico	Accident Number:	CEN16LA030
Date & Time:	October 10, 2015, 08:40 Local	Registration:	N5294Q
Aircraft:	Aerostar RX8	Aircraft Damage:	None
Defining Event:	Windshear or thunderstorm	Injuries:	1 Serious, 2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

After 50 minutes of flight, the commercial pilot landed the balloon and waited for his ground handling crew to arrive. One passenger exited the basket and the pilot and second passenger remained in the basket. When the ground crew arrived, the second passenger and pilot were beginning to exit the basket when a gust of wind pushed the envelope and basket over to a 45° angle. The pilot asked the passenger to hold on and began pulling the envelope deflation line. After a few seconds, the wind shifted and rotated the basket. The pilot and passenger were tossed out of the basket onto the ground. The passenger fell, resulting in a fracture of her shoulder.

The nearest weather reporting facility, located about 15 nautical miles from the accident site, reported wind at 12 knots. The pilot reported that the wind was variable at 3 knots and gusting to 14 knots. The pilot's delay in pulling the vent line completely and deflating the balloon envelope likely made the balloon uncontrollable when the wind gusted. The pilot stated that he should have had the passenger sit down in the bottom of the basket and should have had the ground crew person release the line when the wind shifted.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot's delay in deflating the balloon envelope completely after landing, which resulted in a loss of control due to a wind gust.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Personnel issues	(general) - Pilot
Environmental issues	Gusts - Contributed to outcome

Factual Information

History of Flight

Landing	Windshear or thunderstorm (Defining event)
Landing	Loss of control on ground

On October 9, 2015, about 0840 mountain standard time, a Aerostar RX8 Balloon, N5294Q, registered to the pilot, encountered a gust of wind after landing. Of the three occupants, the pilot and one passenger were not injured and one passenger sustained serious injuries. The local personal flight was being conducted under the provisions of *14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91*. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and a flight plan was not filed. The flight originated from the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta Park, Albuquerque, New Mexico, about 0750.

The pilot stated that after about 50 minutes of flight, he landed the balloon and waited for his ground crew to arrive. One passenger exited the basket and the second passenger remained in the basket. When the ground crew arrived, the second passenger and pilot were beginning to exit the basket when a gust of wind pushed the envelope and basket over at a 45-degree angle. The pilot told the passenger to hold on and began pulling the envelope deflation red line. After a few seconds, the wind shifted 90-degrees and pushed the envelope and rotated the basket 90 degrees. The pilot and passenger were tossed out of the basket onto the ground. The passenger fell on her right shoulder and struck her head on the burner frame. She was transported to the hospital by ambulance and treated for a fracture of the right shoulder.

About the time of the accident, the nearest weather reporting facility, Albuquerque International Sunport, Albuquerque, New Mexico, located about 15 nautical miles from the accident site, reported wind from 080 degrees at 12 knots. The pilot reported on NTSB Form 6120 that the winds were variable at 3 knots and gusting to 14 knots.

The pilot offered a safety recommendation in the submitted NTSB Form 6120. He stated that he should have had the passenger sit down in the bottom of the basket and should have had the ground line ground crew person release the line when the wind shifted.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	49, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	None
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Balloon	Restraint Used:	None
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	None None	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	September 15, 2015
Flight Time:	216 hours (Total, all aircraft), 216 hours (Total, this make and model), 183 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 37 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 21 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Aerostar	Registration:	N5294Q
Model/Series:	RX8	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:	2001	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Balloon	Serial Number:	3347
Landing Gear Type:	Other launch/recovery system	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	September 11, 2015 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1650 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	
Airframe Total Time:	172.4 Hrs at time of accident	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,5354 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	15 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	08:52 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 3000 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 5000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	12 knots / 14 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/ None
Wind Direction:	80°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.42 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	16°C / 9°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Albuquerque, NM	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Albuquerque, NM	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	07:50 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class C

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	None
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	35.180522,-106.590553(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Lemishko, Alexander
Additional Participating Persons:	John R Dewitt; FAA FSDO; Albuquerque, NM
Original Publish Date:	August 28, 2017
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=92291

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](#).