



Aviation Investigation Final Report

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|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Location: | Yountville, California | Accident Number: | WPR19LA104 |
| Date & Time: | April 1, 2019, 07:57 Local | Registration: | N6954Y |
| Aircraft: | Cameron A-400 | Aircraft Damage: | None |
| Defining Event: | Miscellaneous/other | Injuries: | 1 Serious, 2 Minor, 19 None |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation | | |

Analysis

During cruise flight, the balloon encountered a sudden downdraft. The pilot arrested the descent to level flight, but not in time to prevent the bottom of the basket from contacting nearby power lines. The pilot subsequently landed the balloon without further incident. One passenger sustained serious injuries.

The pilot reported that there were no preaccident mechanical failures or malfunctions with the balloon that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's inability to maintain obstacle clearance after the balloon's encounter with a downdraft, which resulted in a collision with power lines.

Findings

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|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Personnel issues | Monitoring environment - Pilot |
| Personnel issues | Aircraft control - Pilot |
| Environmental issues | Downdraft - Effect on operation |

Factual Information

History of Flight

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|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Enroute | Other weather encounter |
| Enroute | Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT) |
| Enroute | Miscellaneous/other (Defining event) |

On April 1, 2019, about 0757 Pacific daylight time, a Cameron Balloons US, A-400 hot air balloon, N6954YA, was not damaged when it was involved in an accident near Napa, California. The pilot and 18 passengers were not injured, one passenger sustained serious injuries and two passengers sustained minor injuries. The balloon was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 sightseeing flight.

The pilot reported that, about 10 minutes into the flight, and about 500 ft, the wind changed direction and the balloon entered a downdraft. The pilot added heat to compensate for the descent and level flight was established. The balloon's basket subsequently contacted a power line. After the pilot attained a slow ascent, the power line released from the basket, and the pilot immediately landed the balloon in a field without further incident.

The pilot reported that there were no preaccident mechanical failures or malfunctions with the balloon that would have precluded normal operation.

Pilot Information

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Certificate: | Commercial | Age: | 71 |
| 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: | Class 3 With waivers/limitations | Last FAA Medical Exam: | October 6, 2008 |
| Occupational Pilot: | | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | | | |

Passenger Information

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|----------------------------------|--|------|
| Certificate: | Age: | |
| Airplane Rating(s): | Seat Occupied: | None |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | Restraint Used: | |
| Instrument Rating(s): | Second Pilot Present: | No |
| Instructor Rating(s): | Toxicology Performed: | No |
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Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Aircraft Make: | Cameron | Registration: | N6954Y |
| Model/Series: | A-400 No Series | Aircraft Category: | Balloon |
| Year of Manufacture: | 2017 | Amateur Built: | |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Balloon | Serial Number: | 6826 |
| Landing Gear Type: | None | Seats: | |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | | Engines: | |
| Airframe Total Time: | | Engine Manufacturer: | |
| ELT: | | Engine Model/Series: | |
| Registered Owner: | On file | Rated Power: | |
| Operator: | On file | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | Commercial air tour (136) |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

| | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual (VMC) | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | KAPC,14 ft msl | Distance from Accident Site: | 12 Nautical Miles |
| Observation Time: | 14:54 Local | Direction from Accident Site: | 163° |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Few / 10000 ft AGL | Visibility | 10 miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | | Visibility (RVR): | |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | 4 knots / | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | 350° | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | 30.01 inches Hg | Temperature/Dew Point: | 11°C / 9°C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | No Obscuration; No Precipitation | | |
| Departure Point: | Yountville, CA | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | Unknown |
| Destination: | Yountville, CA | Type of Clearance: | VFR |
| Departure Time: | 07:30 Local | Type of Airspace: | Class G |

Wreckage and Impact Information

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 None | Aircraft Damage: | None |
| Passenger Injuries: | 1 Serious, 2 Minor, 18 None | Aircraft Fire: | None |
| Ground Injuries: | | Aircraft Explosion: | None |
| Total Injuries: | 1 Serious, 2 Minor, 19 None | Latitude, Longitude: | 38.39611,-122.35778(est) |

Administrative Information

| | |
|--|---|
| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | Smith, Maja |
| Additional Participating Persons: | Tony Rocha; FAA |
| Original Publish Date: | February 9, 2022 |
| Last Revision Date: | |
| Investigation Class: | Class 3 |
| Note: | The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident. |
| Investigation Docket: | https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=99223 |

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](#).