



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	GALLUP, NM	<b>Accident Number:</b>	FTW96LA059
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	12/02/1995, 0930 MST	<b>Registration:</b>	N9606A
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Thunder and Colt AX9-140	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	None
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Serious, 6 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

The pilot obtained a weather briefing about 1 hour and 15 minutes prior to the balloon flight. About 30 to 35 minutes into the flight, winds increased, and the balloon was pushed over a wilderness area with ridges and canyons. Several approaches were abandoned due to power lines. Winds increased to 35 knots and the passengers were briefed for a hard landing. During the landing, the pilot was ejected from the balloon. Passengers grabbed the vent line and continued to pull until the balloon came to a stop. The total drag distance was 300 to 400 feet.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the high winds and the pilot's failure to maintain aircraft control.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: HARD LANDING  
Phase of Operation: LANDING - FLARE/TOUCHDOWN

### Findings

1. (C) WEATHER CONDITION - HIGH WIND
2. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

## Factual Information

On December 2, 1995, at 0930 mountain standard time, a Thunder & Colt, AX9-140, N9606A, dragged the basket while landing near Gallup, New Mexico. The commercial pilot was seriously injured and her six passengers were not injured. The balloon was being operated by the owner/operator under Title 14 CFR Part 91. The local flight originated about 1 hour before the accident. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and a flight plan was not filed.

During interviews, conducted by the FAA inspector, and on the enclosed Pilot/Operator report, the following information was stated. The pilot obtained a weather briefing about 1 hour and 15 minutes prior to the flight. About 30 to 45 minutes into the flight, the wind "increased significantly beyond the forecast." The winds pushed the balloon over a wilderness area with "high ridges, deep and narrow canyons." Several approaches beyond the wilderness were abandoned due to power lines. During the aborted attempts, the winds was increasing in velocity. About 5 minutes before landing the passengers were briefed on the "high wind landing procedures."

Police personnel at the landing site a few minutes after the accident measured the wind to be 260 degrees at 25 knots. They also reported that the winds "had forced the basket to turn over" and the pilot was "ejected at the second hit." Realizing that the balloon was dragging along without a pilot, the passengers grabbed the vent line and continued to pull it until the balloon came to a stop. The total drag distance was approximately 300 to 400 feet. The chase crew reported the winds "were traveling 30-35 mph."

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial	<b>Age:</b>	36, Female
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Unknown
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Balloon	<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>	Unknown Unknown	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	1131 hours (Total, all aircraft), 325 hours (Total, this make and model), 1101 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 23 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Thunder and Colt	Registration:	N9606A
Model/Series:	AX9-140 AX9-140	Aircraft Category:	Balloon
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	317
Landing Gear Type:		Seats:	0
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	12/01/1995, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2000 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	1 Hours	Engines:	Unknown
Airframe Total Time:	497 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	COLLEEN F. MARCHAND	Rated Power:	
Operator:	COLLEEN F. MARCHAND	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	, 0 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	0000	Direction from Accident Site:	0°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear / 0 ft agl	Visibility	15 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	20 knots / 35 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	260°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	10° C / -7° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:		Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	0830 MST	Type of Airspace:	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	None
Passenger Injuries:	6 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 6 None	Latitude, Longitude:	

## Administrative Information

**Investigator In Charge (IIC):** JOYCE M SMITH **Report Date:** 10/22/1996

**Additional Participating Persons:** KARRY D RAY; ALBUQUERQUE, NM

**Publish Date:**

**Investigation Docket:** NTSB accident and incident dockets serve as permanent archival information for the NTSB's investigations. Dockets released prior to June 1, 2009 are publicly available from the NTSB's Record Management Division at [pubinq@ntsb.gov](mailto:pubinq@ntsb.gov), or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/>.

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The Independent Safety Board Act, as codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 1154(b), precludes the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an incident or accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).