



MEMORANDUM OF INTERVIEW

Dr. David C. Bowling
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: October 5, 2015

Subject: Conversation with Ms. Neida Courtney-Naumberg, Pilot of the Accident Balloon N266LB

NTSB Accident Number and Location: CEN15LA434, Albuquerque, NM

Ms. Courtney Naumberg said that she was running out of currency and needed to be sure she was current for the upcoming Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. She got together with Mr. Neal Smith, a friend and commercial balloon pilot, to go up and practice landings in the Lindstrand 69A. She said she had had rotator cuff surgery a year-and-a-half earlier and was getting back into ballooning, flying over the summer. Ms. Courtney-Naumberg mentioned that she usually flies a Lindstrand 90X racing balloon, which climbs and descends faster than the standard balloon. The Lindstrand 69A was a standard balloon so it reacted differently than the racer she was used to flying.

Ms. Courtney Naumberg said she checked the weather; the forecast was good. The set up went fine. It was a nice day to fly. They took off from the west mesa. Her goal was to land on every road to practice landing in town, where she'd have to fly steep approaches to get into small clearings between houses and trees. She said they'd been flying 45 minutes when she made the hard landing. She said she misjudged the descent and expected the balloon to react differently than it did. She had her left arm around the upright and the vent line was in her right hand but behind her. When they hit, both of her knees buckled and she was pitched forward and downward into the bolster of the basket. She said the winds were light. Had this been a normal shallow approach for the area in which she was flying, they would have landed fine.

Ms. Courtney Naumberg said she felt like the wind had been knocked out of her. She said that at that time she did not know she was injured. She said she got out of the balloon and let Neal Smith continue flying the balloon while she rode in the chase vehicle. After Neal Smith landed, she did not help with putting the balloon away, but she went back to the launch site and tail-gated with Neal and the crew. When she got home, she was sore, so she put some ice on her ribs and took a nap, thinking the pain would go away. When she woke up from her nap, she was still in serious pain and realized something more was wrong with her. She went to an urgent care clinic where her ribs were x-rayed. The doctor told her she had 7 broken ribs and that because of her age, she needed to go to the University of New Mexico Trauma Unit. There they did a CT

scan of her ribs and told her that two and possibly up to 6 ribs were broken. The doctors prescribed her pain medication and told her to go home and behave herself.