



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Jim Silliman
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: April 23, 2018
Person Contacted: Mr. Chris Oliver
NTSB Accident Number: CEN19LA006

Narrative:

Mr. Oliver stated that he was at the Albuquerque Balloon Festival and that it was the fourth time that he was there as a pilot-in-command. About 500 balloons departed around the same time that morning. His departure was in one of the later departure times.

He stated that he departed in a southeast direction. After about 30 to 40 minutes, the wind speed started to increase to 10 to 15 knots, and he couldn't change directions by changing his altitude. The balloon was headed for the Kirtland AFB, which is a prohibited zone for the Balloon Festival. He stated that he was concerned about how much propane remained and the airspace constraints. He decided it was best to get the balloon on the ground at the nearest available landing site. Due to the high winds, he flew a steep approach to get the basket firmly on the ground. A steep approach made for a harder impact due to vertical velocity, but it was necessary because he didn't want to get the basket dragged by the wind.

He stated that the winds were predicted to be light, and the high winds he encountered were unexpected. Balloons that landed about 1 mile west or more from the accident site encountered much lighter winds and experienced better landings. Another balloon that was next to his landed in the same area at the Kirtland AFB as he did. They also had a hard landing due to the winds but did not experience any injuries.

He stated that had he been more familiar with the local weather patterns that he might have made different decisions in the early part of the flight. He thought that the area where he landed might have been catching winds that were being affected by the nearby mountains. Had he known that, he might have tried to keep the balloon further to the west where it might not have been affected as much by the local winds.