



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Eastern Region

Date: August 21, 2015
Person Contacted: Bob Fisher (Pilot)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA15LA319

Narrative:

The following is a summary of the conversation with the pilot in command:

Last Saturday evening, we decided to do the flight. The pilot and ground crew got to the launch site and the set up was normal. There were no issues, except that the winds were a little higher than he liked for launch so they elected to wait a little while until the winds died down.

Winds were at 6 to 8 miles per hour and were scheduled to drop to 3 mph by sunset. After about 40 to 45 minutes, the winds diminished and they launched.

Pilot stated they took off from their location near Intercourse, PA at about 6:45 pm and the launch and flight was uneventful. The weather was clear.

Approaching the end of the flight, pilot elected to land a little bit early. Sunset was approaching. He asked the passengers if they would mind landing about 10 minutes early. He briefed the passengers for landing.

Pilot set up for landing and scanned the area to the north to find an adequate site. He saw the hay field, looked around and didn't see any other spots that looked suitable.

He checked his fuel and it was reading about 50%. He called the ground crew and informed them of the landing location. He told the ground crew to park in the hay field and walk across the field south towards the corn so they could quickly get the basket.

On final approach at about 120-150 feet, they crossed over a farm and touched the last 4 rows of corn leading into the hay field. Pilot stated he wanted to land as close to the corn as possible.

The basket hit the ground in normal fashion and went about 20 degrees forward tilt. The basket then recoiled several times before coming to a stop.

When the basket stopped, the pilot thought he had about 50 feet to the power line.

He asked the passengers if they were ok, and they both replied yes.

He started performing the shutdown procedures and as he was turning off the first valve, someone yelled "Bob, the balloon is getting really light!" He looked up and saw that the balloon was narrowing. He then saw that the vent line had detached and slid under the basket. It was caught between the ground and the basket and it was causing the balloon to vent.

He yanked on it and pulled it out from under the basket.

He could see the balloon drift towards the wires and pulled the basket about 15 degrees forward in the direction of the wires. As he was attempting to get out of the basket to help secure it, he felt the shock and remembered hitting the ground on his back. He remained conscious and could hear the cracking and zapping for about 5 to 8 seconds.

He got back up and saw both passengers lying on the ground; one was partially in the basket and the other was completely out.