

Inspector's Statement of Events:

On July 23, 2023, at approximately 2142 Est, a Head's Balloons AX8-88 was providing tethered rides at the Guilford Fairgrounds to observe a laser Light show. The pilot had been operating the balloon for approximately 3 Hours and as witnesses stated, there was an established process in place of boarding and un-boarding the basket prior to the rides taking place. Individuals would take turns getting on and off, one at a time. At the time of the flight, 6 passengers were loaded onto the balloon along with the pilot who brought the passengers up, and then back down. As witnesses stated, when the balloon got back down, there was no volunteers to assist in un-boarding / boarding process. Three passengers got off and no one got on to counterbalance the balloon. As the fourth passenger got off the balloon, the balloon started to ascend. At that time, witnesses stated that three volunteers attempted to grab the basket to prevent it from ascending. The ascent was too strong, and two of the three volunteers let go of the basket. One volunteer continued to hold on until the balloon had ascended approximately 15 feet at which point the individual let go suffering multiple serious injuries.