



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

### Tealeye Cornejo

Air Safety Investigator (Field)

### Western Pacific Region

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**Date:** August 2019

**Person Contacted:** Brann Smith

**Contact Information:** Tel: [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

**NTSB Accident Number:** WPR19LA228

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### Narrative:

According to the Mr. Smith, they were at an event offering tether rides in hot air balloons. The balloon would be loaded with passengers and the ride was to a height of 50 ft; the balloon went up and down. About 0800 the ropes were hooked up for the tether rides. About 0830, the balloon coordinator ground the balloons for safety reasons due to increased winds.

Mr. Smith stated that the balloon was tethered by 3 ropes to the rigid frame, and each rope was then tethered to trucks on the ground. At this time, about 10-12 people were holding his balloon down, when a vertical wind picked up the balloon and it began a rapid ascent, the people holding the basket let go, and the balloon shot up to the end of the ropes (tethers). One of the attachment points (eyelet screw) to the balloon broke and the rope was let loose; the balloon was now being retained by two ropes for about a minute while Mr. Smith was venting and letting the air out when a second rope came loose due to a separated eyelet screw.

The basket was spun around, and he saw an open field with power lines, and called down to his crew to cut the remaining tether. Mr. Smith added heat, but the throat had closed and the Nomex skirt and it caught fire. As he got over the field, and started his descent, the balloon was fully inflated and the descent was fast, which caused the balloon to land hard. He turned off the burners, the balloon envelope went over on its side, and he crawled out of the basket.

Mr. Smith stated that he was going to replace the eyelet screws used to attach the tether ropes with "double A blocks."