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Date: May 6th, 2026

Subject: WPR26LA176, Phone conversation with the PIC

Contact: [REDACTED], Pilot in Command

I spoke with the pilot of N4022X, a Cameron Balloon C-80, which occurred in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, on May 2, 2026.

He stated that the purpose of the flight was to fly with a student-pilot friend who had recently purchased the balloon. Although he is not a certified instructor, he agreed to take his friend flying.

Before takeoff, they conducted a safety briefing that included instructions on how to brace and position themselves for landing. The flight was uneventful, and they chose to land in a large open area east of Rio Rancho, near the intersection of 7th Street NE and Joe Harris Ave NE.

He stated he was on the controls and that they performed a steep approach to the landing area. The winds picked up slightly during the approach, reaching an estimated speed of about 8 MPH, but there was a wind buffer effect from the nearby houses.

They initially touched down and began some ground tracking maneuvers before making the final landing. On the final landing, they experienced a bump upon touching the ground and subsequently dragged across the ground for a short distance. [REDACTED] noted that the student pilot had her hands on the uprights of the balloon instead of down low, as they should have been.

During one of the bumps, an upright snapped, injuring the student pilot's shoulder and arm in from the movement of the balloon. [REDACTED] stated that the balloon was not substantially damaged, and he mentioned that the uprights are optional equipment that can break fairly easily, but that the student pilot's arm was not injured from being impacted by the upright. But rather it was how she was holding on caused her arm to get pulled when the upright broke.

He also confirmed that there was no fire associated with the flight or the balloon, and there were no pre-accident mechanical issues that would have impeded normal operation.