

No: 6/92

Ref: EW/G92/03/14

Category: 5

Aircraft Type and Registration: Cameron A-210, G-BSVC
No & Type of Engines: None
Year of Manufacture: 1990
Date & Time (UTC): 8 March 1992 at 1030 hrs
Location: Selborne, Hampshire
Type of Flight: Public Transport
Persons on Board: Crew - 3 Passengers - 8
Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - 1 (serious)
Nature of Damage: None
Commander's Licence: Commercial Pilot's Licence (Balloons)
Commander's Age: 38 years
Commander's Flying Experience: 1,483 hours (of which 14 were on type)
Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot
and subsequent enquiries by AAIB

The balloon was engaged on a Public Transport pleasure flight, and took off from Greywell, Hampshire at approximately 0910 hours. The commander, who was the Chief Pilot of the company, was accompanied by two other balloon pilots, one holding a Commercial Pilot's Licence, and the other a Private Pilot's Licence. The two pilots holding professional licences occupied the crew area, with the remaining pilot and eight occupants being divided into the two passenger areas of the balloon basket. An uneventful flight terminated in a gentle, stand up landing near Selborne. The passengers had previously been briefed on the correct landing posture (facing rearwards, knees bent, holding on to the basket hand-holds with both hands). After landing, the passengers were told by the PPL crew member that they may stand up normally, but not to vacate the basket, while the crown line was being deployed downwind of the envelope. No reference was made to releasing their grip on the hand-holds. The commander reported that a gust of wind then caught the balloon, causing the basket to tip over rapidly and drag a short distance along the ground.

One passenger, who had relaxed her grip on the hand-hold, was thrown from the then uppermost passenger compartment, hitting her head on the burner frame and landing heavily on one arm.

Subsequent medical examination revealed that the passenger had sustained more serious injury than had been apparent at the time.

An aftercast for the area indicated that, at the time of the accident, the surface wind was from 350° at 7 to 12 kt, with good visibility, and scattered/broken stratus cloud base 1000 feet, with scattered/broken strato-cumulus cloud base 4000 feet. The surface wind limit specified in the company operations manual for this type of operation was 8 kt, but that operations were permitted up to a maximum of 15 kt with the approval of the Chief Pilot.

The content of the passenger briefing is currently left to the discretion of the commander, and is usually assessed as part of the pilot's annual check flight.

There is currently no requirement for passengers on this type of flight to be provided with restraining devices or protective head gear.

The following safety recommendations have therefore been made to the CAA:

92-38 The CAA should consider the introduction of a requirement for a standard passenger briefing to be given prior to and during every public transport flight, the content of which should be included in the operations manual for each company undertaking such operations.

92-39 The CAA should consider the introduction of a recommendation to public transport operators that protective head gear be available to passengers, for take-off and landing operations.

92-40 The CAA should consider the introduction of a recommendation to operators to encourage adherence to the 8 kt wind speed limit for this type of balloon while engaged in public transport operations, rather than the overall 15 kt limit specified by the manufacturer.