

ACCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Colt 105A Hot Air Balloon, G-BPZS	
No & Type of Engines:	None	
Category:	3	
Year of Manufacture:	1989	
Date & Time (UTC):	10 July 2005 at 1855 hrs	
Location:	Farmborough, 10km SW of Bath, Somerset	
Type of Flight:	Public Transport (Passenger)	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - 3
Injuries:	Crew - 0	Passengers - 2
Nature of Damage:	Burnt panel and burnt through rip line	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence (Balloons and Airships)	
Commander's Age:	54 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	268 hours (of which 177 were on type) Last 90 days - 7 hours Last 28 days - 2 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

In attempting to land in a field adjacent to a main road, the balloon struck and severed several electricity cables. One of the cables caught a passenger on the back and another passenger was hit by sparks. Both were subsequently treated in hospital for minor burns.

History of the flight

The balloon took off from a site on the western outskirts of Bath at 1820 hrs. Whilst flying to the north east of Farmborough, the pilot decided to land in a field adjacent to, and to the west of, the A39 road. The pilot reported that he instructed the three other people on board (two passengers and a qualified pilot) to check for

hazards, but it was not until the balloon had descended to approximately 15 ft agl that the pilot became aware of a line of power cables in his path. He attempted to initiate lift by using the burners but, when it became apparent that the balloon would make contact with the cables, the pilot instructed the passengers to get down in the basket and he turned off the propane fuel supply.

The uprights of the basket struck the cables, causing the wires to meet, short out and break. The cables then fell across the A39 road and struck a passing car, causing minor damage to the car, but no injury to the car's occupants. The pilot subsequently landed the balloon

approximately 200 m from the point of impact with the cables where the envelope was deflated and the occupants alighted and were able to walk away. Local police, a police helicopter and ambulance services all attended the scene. One of the wires had caught passenger on their back and another passenger was affected by sparks. Both were subsequently treated in hospital for minor burns.

Weather

The pilot provided both his weather forecast and details of the actual conditions at the time of the accident. Both of these were in good agreement with ‘aftercast’ information supplied by the Met Office. There were light north easterly winds of around 7 kt, no cloud below 5,000 ft and the surface visibility was in excess of 15 km. Sunset was at 2024 hrs.

Accident site

Aerial photographs, taken by the police Western Counties Air Operations Unit, revealed that the pole supporting the cables near to their point of contact with the basket was located about approximately 10 m to the east of the A39 road and was obscured by trees, making both the pole and wires difficult to see from the air. The pilot noted that he had elected to land in the field close to the road in order to facilitate easy access for the recovery vehicle, and to minimise damage to the field. Had he chosen to land close to the centre of the field this incident would most likely not have occurred since the field was relatively large and its central area was free from obstructions.