THE SCOOP

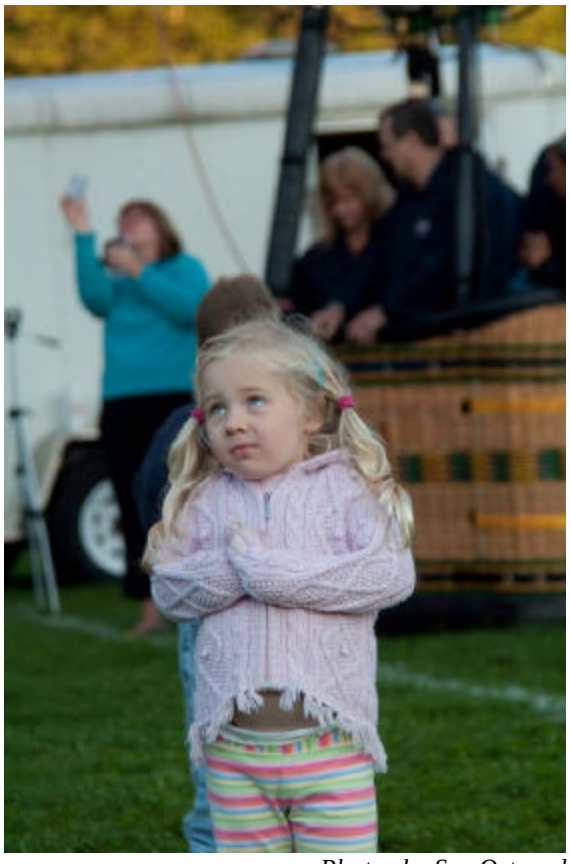
Next CLAS Meeting: Thursday, September 16, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.
Plainville Municipal Building, Plainville, CT

CLAS Flyout, Saturday, September 11, 2010
Aqua Turf Club, Plantsville, CT at sunrise, 6:27 a.m.

The rain date will be the next day, Sunday, September 12, with a possible reschedule to the next weekend if we lose both days. There will be a competition this time. Score well and you may win free dues for next year, a free ticket to our next safety seminar, or our Winter Dinner. All CLAS members will once again eat breakfast for free, courtesy of your club. New members who join that day will also receive a free breakfast.

See you there!

Plainville Balloon Festival 2010



Photos by Sue Ostrander via Facebook, 8/29/10

Plainville Balloon Festival

What a great weekend of weather and a great weekend of flying! Thanks to everyone who made it to Plainvile during the weekend of August 27-29, and thanks to the Plainville FD for another enjoyable festival.

Check out pictures from the festival at the following:

http://www.plainvillefireco.com/Balloon_Festival.html

http://www.flickr.com/photos/14529376@N00/

HallieWestcott

http://rjpubs.mycapture.com/mycapture/category.asp?eventID=1061122&CategoryID=29006

http://www.flickr.com/photos/dhfore/4938948205/

Cartoon by Forrest Zirpolo, 8/29/10

Mike Bollea's Twin?

Did anyone else see this image on the front of the *Hartford Courant* on September 1st? Looks like Mike Bollea had a twin! Thanks to Charlie Perreault for sharing this image.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HURRICANE WATCHING

STEPHEN DUNN | SDUNN@COURANT.COM

ENEA BACCI, owner of Lobster Landing in Clinton for the past 17 years, predicted that Hurricane Earl will miss Connecticut, leaving great weather for the Labor Day weekend. "I can feel it in my bones," he said.

Owners, FAA Prepare for Aircraft Registration Changes, New Fees

For years, registering an aircraft in the United States was relatively easy, painless, and inexpensive: Fill out a multipart FAA form, keep the pink copy, and send in a check for $5. Presuming no other complications, the aircraft was properly registered as long as you owned it and remained at the same address.

On October 1, 2010, however, the FAA will begin transitioning to a new set of registration procedures, which will require re-registering each aircraft in the agency's registry—and paying a fee—every three years. Note: The FAA will cancel the N-numbers of aircraft that aren't re-registered or renewed under the new procedures. An aircraft whose registration has been canceled is, under FAA regulations, no longer airworthy and can't legally be flown.

The new procedures result from a rulemaking process that had begun in 2008 and concluded on July 20, 2010. As the new rule states, over a three-year period, the FAA will "terminate the registration of all aircraft registered before October 1, 2010, and will require the re-registration of each aircraft to retain U.S. civil aircraft status." Thereafter, an aircraft's registration must be renewed every three years and the appropriate fees—which will be greater than $5—paid during the renewal process.

"These improvements will give us more up-to-date registration data and better information about the state of the aviation industry," said FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt in a press release issued last month. "We also are responding to calls from law enforcement and other government agencies for more accurate, up-to-date registration data." In other words, changes to the FAA's registration procedures are being driven, at least in part, by continuing security concerns.

Beginning October 1, 2010, the FAA will mail re-registration notices to all aircraft owners of record. Mailings will be staggered according to a published schedule based on the month in which the aircraft's existing registration was granted and will take place over a three-year period. Once the re-registration notices are mailed, owners will have six months to renew. Thereafter, registrations will expire every three years unless renewed. Currently, some 357,000 civil aircraft are registered in the United States. The FAA believes as many as one-third of those registration records are inaccurate in some way, and it expects as many as 30,000 aircraft will be dropped from the registry as a result of the new procedures. Once the three-year re-registration process concludes, the FAA expects the registry to have only an estimated 5.7percent error rate.

Although the FAA's original regulatory proposal sought to continue the existing $5 registration fee, legislation pending in Congress would allow the agency to increase it. According to the FAA, the legislation's $130 fee "would not apply as the fee for re-registration or renewal." Instead, the agency expects the new fee would be approximately $45, payable every three years when a registration is renewed.

Commenting on the new registration procedures, EAA Director of Government Relations Randy Hansen said, "This is a very costly burden on the public that the FAA can accomplish using other means. The FAA's own data would indicate that the issue is much smaller than presented, and that a major change in the FAA registration system is not warranted."

More information is available from the FAA website: *www.FAA.gov/news/press_releases/news_story.cfm?newsId=11617*.

Photo by Libby Richardson

Derry balloonists stay afloat after devastating fire

By Doug Ireland, eagletribune.com

DERRY — Even though a blazing fire devastated their hot-air balloon business Sunday, the Boucher family intends to rise above their despair — in a hot-air balloon, of course. While Andre and Alice Boucher decide their next move after a blaze destroyed the barn housing their hot-air balloons, one thing is certain: They will keep flying.

The couple's son, Jason, said yesterday he has lent his father his own balloon so A&a Balloon Rides can continue to offer rides to those who wish to soar through the skies. A&a is perhaps best known for its "Bearship" balloon, often seen hovering above Derry. Jason's balloon was the only one not kept on the Warner Hill Road property. "I feel very fortunate that we have a balloon so that we can continue our business," Jason said. Although the 34-year-old has his own balloon business, Infinity & Beyond, he's more than happy to help his father. Andre Boucher was inside the basket of a balloon, filling a propane tank, when the fire broke out shortly before noon Sunday.

A spark ignited the blaze, which quickly engulfed the three-story barn. Several balloons were destroyed, as well as four vehicles and equipment from the family's drywall business. Andre narrowly escaped the fire. "I feel very fortunate that my dad is OK," Jason said. He said he could not comment in detail on the family's future plans. "Everybody is safe and that's all that matters," Jason said.

The family is still trying to pick up the pieces and recover from the shock of what happened, he said."It's still pretty much chaos," he said, before hopping into a bus used to transport the basket for his hot-air balloon.

On the other side of the property lay the charred remains of the family's 40-by-60-foot barn, including the four burned-out vehicles and piles of debris. A burned sofa sat on the front lawn. Yellow police tape was strung across the fire site. Several black-streaked propane tanks stood nearby. Portions of the front lawn were scarred by burn marks — evidence of a two-alarm blaze that sparked several explosions and sent debris flying about 250 feet, according to Battalion Chief Jack Webb of the Derry Fire Department.

A piece of an exploding propane tank hit a tree 175 feet away and another piece of debris hit a neighbor's mailbox about 250 feet away, Webb said. About 15 area fire departments responded, with the last leaving the scene approximately three hours later. Since the fire, the family has received an outpouring of support, especially from fellow balloonists.

"We have other friends that have lent their balloons," Jason said. "That is great."One of those people is Dale Riley of Milford. Riley stopped by yesterday to help out his old friend Andre and offered to lend him his balloon.

"It's something we all do for each other," Riley said later. "It's not a huge deal."Once he heard of the fire, Riley didn't hesitate to help. "We've been friends for a good many years," the 71-year-old said. "It's a shame. Andre has always been a real great balloonist." Riley said he could sympathize with the Bouchers after losing his sawmill business in a fire 15 years ago. "He's a tough guy," Riley said. "I can understand how he feels."

Although balloonists rely on propane to power their balloons, Riley said such accidents are rare."It's not something that you worry about because it just doesn't happen," he said.

More Festivals, More Photos

URI Balloon Festival, Photo by Craig Morris via Facebook

Saint-Jean-sur-Richeleiu Festival, Photo by Jim Regan via Facebook

From The Scoop Editor, Libby Richardson

Thanks to everyone who attended the CLAS Picnic on August 21st at the Dressels. 25 people attended, and it was great to see everyone prior to the Plainville Balloon Festival.

Looking forward to seeing everyone on September 11th as we fly out of the Aqua Turf. Great photo ops from here! You may want to remember your camera--calendar time is just around the corner!

Thanks to Daryl Smith, Charlie Perreault, Robert Zirpolo, Sue Ostrander, Jim Regan, Rick Silva, Craig Morris, Penny Christy, Ellen and Erwin Dressel for your contributions to The Scoop this month.

Publishing Information

The Scoop is published on a monthly basis prior to the club's monthly meeting on the third Thursday of each month. Submissions for *The Scoop* are preferred by email to Editor Libby Richardson at libby_rich@yahoo.com. Photos, articles, and ideas are always welcome. Information may be mailed to 380 Hitchcock Road #258, Waterbury, CT 06705 or can be brought to any CLAS meeting. All materials should be to the Editor at least two weeks prior to the club meeting for inclusion.

The Connecticut Lighter Than Air Society publishes this newsletter for its members and interested parties. Portions of this newsletter may be reprinted if credit is given to the writer and to CLAS. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the organization or members of this organization.

For more information contact Libby Richardson, CLAS, PO Box 53, Southbury, CT 06488-0053. Email: libby_rich@yahoo.com; Phone: 203-988-6577

Lay Out to Launch

by Gordon Schwontkowski

Photo by Sue Verner Grant via Facebook

Dozens of factors contributing to safety dovetail at the launch site. Unattended, even the smallest and most common sense details can set up risks and even accidents as the flight unfolds; studies show 80% of all errors leading to incidents occur in pre-flight planning and set-up. A well-trained, thorough, and proactive crew can guarantee a pre-flight set-up flows smoothly and uneventfully into a safe inflation, launch, and flight. Every flight requires crew master skills in weather, navigation, emergency handling, and proactive flight planning as quickly as possible. And the time for this is well before the flight and long enough before the accident to prevent it from occurring. What follows is an overview of the common elements of most setups and inflations. Every pilot's expectations differ, but balloon brands differ little outside of equipment configurations. Every crew needs its own procedures, routines, and checklists to consistently maintain safety. The following overview can help your crew create or refine yours. Consider how you will address and factor in each on every flight.

PRE-FLIGHT

Waivers. Clipboards keep releases and written briefings (for passengers and crew) central and organized. Decide who gets signatures; do it early and get it out of the way.

Crew. All should know where and when to meet. Number varies; the trend is using 1-3 rather than all-you-can-find. Make sure all have gloves, long sleeves, pants, and supportive footwear.

Passengers. Are they all here or are late ones on their way? Have they signed paperwork? Are they fit to fly? Will they want to help set up? Do they have people watching or following? Cover your bases.

Decision to fly. Preview safety concerns: purpose, forecasts, equipment, passenger age/health, and pilot skill among other things should all be compatible. Assess and discuss any concerns.

Emergency procedures. Know how to recognize, prevent, and manage trouble before you get in it. Crew should know how to handle power line strikes, fires, fuel system shut-down, lost balloons, and other situations. Keep that emergency contact list updated and at hand.

First aid. A first aid kit in your truck is a must. Keep current by taking a basic or refresher course to tend to anything from minor burns to broken bones and shock.

Vehicle/driver. A sound vehicle and driver capable of confidently handing it are essential. Know how to operate 4WD, lift gates, stick shift, trailer backing, and driving using only mirrors.

Navigation. Learn your flight area's roads, terrain, weather patterns, hazards, and red zones. Plotting flight paths on road maps, sectional charts, or electronics helps eliminate driving guesswork.

Weather. See the big picture, then zero in on what's immediately around you. Learn how to interpret forecasts, get automated updates, read pibals and weather cues, and handle your balloon under ANY weather conditions.

Flight plan. Discuss how long, how high, how far, and how likely various landing sites are. Transpose forecast conditions onto your map(s) to make informed decisions during the flight.

Briefings. Passengers need instruction and questions answered. Crew need task assignments. Be thorough – the entire flight will unfold according to your script.

Launch site. Permission comes first. Next come hazards like power lines, standing water, gopher holes, fabric-hungry debris, etc. Will you need a windbreak or tarp?

Last call. Last chance to make that phone call, find the restroom, grab a drink, get your camera, or shed layers of clothing.

SET-UP

Time to open the trailer doors or drop the lift-gate! Most pilots oversee set-up themselves, but learn your pilot's routines for when they get distracted, time pressures squeeze you, or you decide to become a pilot. Watch your pilot carefully, ask questions, and learn all you can:

Layout. Step away from your truck and check wind direction. Choose a position which allows you to safely climb out over obstacles. Leave keys in the ignition for quick moving.

Basket and inflation tank. Slide the basket gently onto the ground allowing other pilots plenty of room. Assemble uprights and burner(s). When using a separate inflation tank, strap it inside the basket in the normal way. Tip the basket over with its burner(s) pointing downwind (or what will be on launch).

Envelope. Carry or unload the bag a few paces in front of the burner(s). Open it, orient fabric, and connect carabiners or hardware to the basket. Lift the bag and walk downwind. Fold and return the bag to your basket or truck. Stretch out the crown line and check parachute webbing.

Spread fabric. Let your fan do the work on hot days or paved surfaces. Otherwise, start at the throat, grab proper load tapes, and gently pull outward as you walk toward the load ring. STOP if you feel any resistance. Flapping the load tape to trap a small bubble beneath which floats fabric puts less stress on equipment and crew. Be careful not to trap too much air beneath the balloon.

Fan. Each pilot chooses placement, but it's generally below the basket's leather rails in most cases. Fan safety transcends pilot preference or brand name – always use caution around fans.

Truck and tie-off. Move your truck so your tie-off reaches your basket without excessive slack. Secure both ends and best the quick release. Place a shirt or blanket over the line so spectators will see it and avoid walking into it.

Other equipment. Make sure radios are charged, onboard, on the right frequency, and checked. Drop lines, maps, strikers, tools, and other items should be securely stored in proper places.

INFLATION THROUGH LAUNCH

Fan crew. While many pilots will monitor the fan themselves, dedicating one person to this is wise. Start at your pilot's signal and shut and remove on cue: as heat is added, as your balloon stands, or if the basket swings into the fan. Always shut the fan before moving it.

Throat crew. These can be either 2 eager passengers or the pilot alone. Goals include holding the throat open, keeping cables away from the burner, and pulling the red line if necessary.

Crown line crew. When properly handled, no more than 1-3 adults are needed. After tabbing the parachute, provide stability on cold inflation and control the stand-up. Inspect fabric as the balloon rises and stabilize the balloon until you bring the line to the basket right before launch.

Loading passengers. Passengers will enter the basket soon after the basket stands, especially on windier launches. Assist all of them, be it "spotting" or getting their legs over the side.

Weight or hands on. If asked, crew and passengers put their hands or body weight on the basket as your pilot adds heat. Stand to the side or back of the basket and watch for the tie-off. Make sure your feet aren't beneath the basket as it tips or hops.

Photo by Libby Richardson

Inflation tanks. High altitude launch, high ambient temperature, and/or heavy passenger loads often prompt pilots to hot inflate or super-heat off an extra tank. ***USE EXTREME CAUTION WHEN DISCONNECTING/RECONNECTING TANKS PRIOR TO LAUNCH.*** Inflation tanks and/or homemade fuel adapters have been responsible for many accidents, injuries, and even fatalities. Always station a crew member near the pilot when changing tanks or fittings. If your pilot keeps an extra inflation tank onboard, make sure it's strapped and secured as any other tank to prevent in-flight shifting or any movement on landing. If the tank is outside the basket, stay nearby to keep hose tension from dragging, knocking, or tipping it over. Always stay nearby as your pilot uncouples and re-attaches hoses in case a fire occurs; your help in shutting down a tank, fighting a fire, or unloading passengers may be needed. If a tank can't be secured inside the basket during a flight as recommended by the manufacturer, make all efforts to insure a smooth landing.

Final checks. Use pilot and crew checklists: reseat the parachute, check fuel system, radio check, equipment in place, adding heat. Verify statuses and catch oversights. Don't rush or assume here. Also check for overhead traffic, downwind obstacles, and crew/spectators near ropes and lines. Quickly assess every part of the balloon; if something doesn't look right, it probably isn't.

Weight or hands off. After the crown line's in, this call tells your pilot how "light" the balloon is. Be ready to add weight again on command or walk the balloon forward for launch. A final call of "weight off" means take your weight off and step back away from the basket and tie-off to stay clear. Lines around the basket may snag you, the basket may move backwards and pin you against your vehicle or knock you over, or leather basket rails may "pop" your jaw.

Launch. Keep everyone away from the tie-off as it's released. Note launch time. Do a quick visual sweep to make sure no crew or spectators are holding onto the basket or caught in lines.

Assessment. Check for fabric distortion or damage. Take a reading on direction and speed. Watch for shears or false lift as your balloon climbs.

Photo by Libby Richardson

These are just the basics; the hundreds of factors contributing to your flight's safety will vary with many factors. Seem like a lot to remember? It is – that's why many top pilots and crew use checklists long after they memorize their routines. Familiarity breeds complacency, and distractions and interruptions are frequent. Checklists prevent oversights and help form safe habits. FAA practical tests require pilots to use checklists, and crew can benefit from this as well. Develop your own written pre-flight checklists; the best are those you make yourself, revise constantly, and allow to evolve with time. Skilled crew delicately weave pre-flight factors and decisions into flight safety long before starting the fan. The effects of marginal conditions, late passengers, and too few crew will cascade and grow throughout the flight sequence; knowing this early lets you compensate or make appropriate decisions later. As most errors leading to accidents occur at pre-flight, NOW is the time to set the stage for flight safety. Despite being solely responsible for the flight and safety of all around, your pilot cannot do this entirely alone. Crew's observations, decisions, and actions all determine how safe an inflation and flight will be. Any crew member can spot that single oversight or glitch that leads to trouble – pay close attention to every aspect of pre-flight set-up.

The Connecticut Lighter Than Air Society is a club for anyone interested in learning about, participating in, and improving the sport of ballooning. Pilots, crew, and enthusiasts alike are welcome and ALL can contribute to the safety, enjoyment and education of the sport. Meetings are scheduled monthly on the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Plainville Police Department, 19 Neal Court, Plainville, at 7:30 PM. For more information, contact any of the officers listed in this newsletter.

CLAS DUES $20 include membership privileges and newsletter.
Extra voting family member add $5
Newsletter Subscription Only $15 CLAS Member Pins $5 ($3 members)
Decals $2 ($1 members) Landowner Pins $4 ($3 members – limited quantity)

NAME _____
ADDRESS_____
CITY_____STATE_____ZIP_____
TELEPHONE (Home) _____(Work)_____(Cell)_____
E-Mail_____
(Default will be electronic newsletter unless notified otherwise.)

CLAS Membership Info:
Single ($20)___ Family ($20)___ Extra Vote ($5) Name: _____ Newsletter Only ($15)____
New _____ Renewing _____
Crew_____ Student Pilot _____Private Pilot_____ Commercial Pilot_____ N#_____
BFA #_____ BFA CAAP Level _____ BFA PAAP Level _____
FAA Wings Level Completed_____
Pilot Certificate # _____Type(s) of Certificate(s) _____

Make checks payable to CLAS and mail to: CLAS, PO Box 53, Southbury, CT 06488-0053

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