

## Plano Balloon Festival Field Operator Guidelines

Always be aware that our primary reason for participating in the Balloon Festival is safety. While we may be asked to assist in other ways, SAFETY is our first and foremost commitment.

**Mission:** To provide the Launch field net control with an accurate accounting of balloons on the field and to maintain a high level of safety at the launch field.

### Safety Guidelines

- Wear an orange or green safety vest when working the launch field. Vests are issued at the Net Control desk if you do not have your own.
- No Smoking on the launch field. **Politely inform any smoker of the restriction.** If the person is non-compliant, contact Launch directors, other Festival officials or the field marshals.
- The general public and casual bystanders are not allowed on the Launch field, unless the Field NCS has clearly communicated otherwise. The general public is to stay behind the cordons. Crewmembers usually wear some form of ID. Some family members of Pilots may not have IDs. Use common sense. "Unauthorized" bystanders should be politely asked to leave the field.
- Stay clear of tether straps attached from balloons to vehicles. These can be dangerous if the balloon snaps free at launch.
- Use caution when walking over lines on the ground and **Do Not** walk on balloon envelopes.
- Be alert to Balloon crew vehicles moving around the launch field.
- Be aware of what is going on around you.
- Avoid using photographic equipment while on duty on the field. The field radio operator's responsibility is to ensure others safety.
- **If you hear the field air horn, leave the field immediately.**

### Field Net Procedures

- Field frequency: 146.480 Simplex. If an alternate is needed, the Field NCS will announce it to all stations.
- One or more people will be assigned to monitor the field entrance ramp to identify Balloon crew vehicles to the Net Control as they enter and exit the field.
- A liaison will be assigned to attend the Pilot briefing on the field and to relay conditions and instructions to the Net Control. Watch the small helium balloon (Pie-ball) released at the field to determine wind speed and direction aloft.
- The field will be divided into imaginary sections and at least one person will be assigned to each section. "Extra" personnel may be assigned as roamers to look for balloon numbers as they launch. It is helpful to be on the downwind side of your section.
- After you have reached your position, Net Control will call for a radio check and Call Sign IDs. Look around your position and verify that there is a number banner on the balloon gondola (basket) and that it matches the number on the windshield of the crew recovery vehicle(s).
- Balloons **CANNOT** launch until they are given permission by one of the Launch Directors on the field. Launch Directors wear black and white "Referee" type shirts (Zebras). By watching their activity, you can often determine which balloons will probably launch next.

- Balloonists and their crews often mistake radio operators in their vests for launch directors. **NO RADIO OPERATOR CAN GIVE ANY BALLOON PERMISSION TO LAUNCH!!** Refer them to a Launch Director.
- A balloon is launched when it is free of any control by the ground crew. When reporting a balloon as launched, simply give the balloon number and UP. Example: "26 UP".
- When the launch is complete or if you need to leave the field, call the Field Marshall for permission to secure. Please do not just leave the field. If you borrowed a vest please return it to the Net Control desk.

### General Information

- Field volunteers should dress appropriately for the weather, including water resistant comfortable walking shoes, a hat, a jacket or rain coat and sunscreen. An orange or green reflective safety vest is required. A few extra may be available at Field staging for checkout.
- All operators should bring a 2m HT with two batteries and a headset / microphone. Speaker mikes are not appropriate for the launch field due to the heightened noise level.
- Launch field work is not a contest to see who can call in the most balloons launched. It is a "contest" to see that all balloons are accurately accounted for (launched, tethered, or not).
- In the event it becomes necessary for you to communicate emergency information or any other high priority traffic, remain calm and inform Net Control that you have a "situation". Remain calm and objective and carefully answer questions as Net Control asks them. Net Control will most likely move you to another frequency or have you contact them via cell phone.
- As communications volunteers, it is NOT our function to speak for or on behalf of the Plano Balloon Association, the Plano Balloon Festival Committee or any emergency personnel or department to the media or to the general public concerning any emergency situations or other high priority or confidential traffic to which we are privy. Refer all media and public queries to Plano Balloon Festival Officials. This includes post event discussions, especially on any local repeater(s).

### Balloons That Land In or Around the Field

- Once an inflated balloon leaves the confines of the field, it is the responsibility of Recovery to manage the operation unless otherwise agreed upon. A balloon that flies onto the field and deflates and will no longer fly shall be called into the Field Net Control and the number of the balloon will be relayed to Recovery.

### Minors Release Form

- Volunteers under the age of 18 must have a Minor Release Form completed and submitted to the field NCS prior to operating their first shift.

### CRF - Communication Resource Function Guideline

- CRF-S  
<http://garlandr.s412.sureserver.com/CRF%20Info/CRF%20Guide-Rev%20G1.pdf>

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