

## Plano Balloon Festival RECOVERY 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.

Both the Balloon Recovery Net and the Field Net at the launch site are directed nets. Participants in these nets should observe the same protocol as used in Condition 3 weather nets, i.e., minimum-reporting criteria as defined by the net control station (NCS), all communication going through and directed by the NCS.

We do not have "ACCIDENTS"!! We have "situations". If a "situation" should occur during the Festival, remain calm and call the NCS. Indicate to the NCS that you do indeed have a situation. The NCS will then direct you to an Alternate Frequency so you can pass your traffic concerning the situation or ask you to call them via cell phone.

If a "situation" does occur, do NOT talk to the press or the general public. If you are asked questions concerning the situation, refer the questioner to the appropriate Balloon Festival Liaison. There is a site safety plan in place to handle situations at the launch field. The Field NCS will advise you of the appropriate action.

For Safety reasons, NO ONE should work balloon Recovery alone! It is difficult to watch the sky and the road at the same time. Prior to each launch, radio operators will be directed from the Primary Recovery Net repeater, to a gathering location for a briefing by the Recovery Director. At this time lone operators will be paired up.

Age discretion. Recovery drivers must be 21 of age or older. Co-pilots must be 14 or older.

Balloons are not "Down" (landed) until the Envelope is deflated and lying flat on the ground. Balloon pilots will often touch down in a field, change passengers and lift off again. Check with the balloon pilot to make sure they ARE down, verify that they are in communication with their chase crew, get their "entry number" (should be visible on the basket but confirm with the pilot), and indicate that you will call them in. Contact the NCS and advise the number of the balloon that is down. If the pilot is not in communication with his ground crew, *stay with the balloon until communication is established or the ground crew arrives.*

PAY ATTENTION TO THE NET IN PROGRESS and note the balloons already called in to the NCS. The balloon pilots are very appreciative of our efforts to make sure they are down safely and called in, BUT it can be quite distracting to a pilot when five radio operators walk up to them at different times to ask if they have been called in. If you've heard a balloon called in, don't disturb the pilot and don't call it in again. Redundancy is not necessary. If there is a question as to a balloon's status, the NCS will initiate same.

There is no award for calling in the most balloons!! Pay attention!! If you see a radio operator already with a balloon, don't try to get a jump on him and call the balloon number in first, especially if the envelope is not deflated. Hopefully there will be plenty of balloons to go around. It is also good practice to make a short list of numbers and call them all in at one time. It reduces the amount of times an operator needs to contact the NCS.

If someone on the net experiences "malicious" interference, PLEASE IGNORE IT. Do not acknowledge it. Do not try to engage the interfering station in conversation. PRETEND IT ISN'T THERE! If the interference seriously impedes the net, The NCS will direct you how to proceed.

### Crossing into Recovery Zone # 2 Procedure

**Primary Recovery Net 2 will report to the RECOVERY NET 2 FIELD MARSHAL.  
Contact to be made on the Net 2 Tactical Frequency**

When you cross into Recovery Zone #2, please check out of Recovery Net #1 and check into Recovery NET #2 (Outer Net).

No one other than Net Controllers may operate at any time on more than one of the frequencies.

Once you have checked into a Recovery Net frequency, you may not freely "bounce" between frequencies. When your assignment is complete, you will most likely be asked to check back into Primary Recovery Net (Inner Net) and continue back to the original staging location.

At no time will recovery operators begin their own net. The recovery operation is a directed net in "Condition 3" as operated under an ARES net.

### Tracking Balloons

It is highly desired if an operator is able to track more than one balloon. Recovery operators are often in short supply. If you have a cluster of 2 or more balloons and one detaches itself from the group and begins to land, make an effort to keep an eye out for where the others have gone. Even though another operator may have been observing them as well, they may lose sight of it and may ask for assistance. Additionally, you may be asked to re-track it once "your" balloon's envelope has popped! A very good example of this can be found in the Recovery Training Video.

### Pre-Flight Briefings

It is expected that all recovery persons report to the pre-flight briefings. Items such as recovery logistics, resources, flight status and concerns are covered in this briefing. Many persons arrive without partners and/or gear. This is where we team up and make sure everyone is comfortable with their equipment and their co-pilots. APRS can also be checked here.

### APRS

It is in everyone's best interest to make sure their APRS gear is up and running prior to the festival. We will not interrupt traffic during the launches to give APRS reports.

Please be sure to set your equipment to:

WIDE1-1,WIDE2-1  
Beacon rate of no less than 3 minutes (5 is suggested)  
Do not smart beacon. Keep packet quantity low  
Frequency: 144.340 (PBF Primary) or 144.390 (Secondary)

**CRF** – Communication Resource Function Guideline

CRF-M, CRF-DT:

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