

# Plano Balloon Festival

## Launch Field Operation Guidelines

**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 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...if noncompliant, contact Launch directors or other Festival officials.
- No casual bystanders are allowed on the Launch field...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
- Generally stay alert to what's going on around you.

### Field Net Procedures:

- Field frequency is 146.48 simplex. If an alternate is needed, the field NCS will announce it to all.
- 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 little 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 will be assigned as roamers to scurry about looking 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 IDs. In walking around, verify that there is a number banner on the balloon gondola (basket) and it matches the number on the windshield of the crew chase vehicle(s).
- Balloons CAN NOT launch until they are given permission by one of the *Launch Directors* on the field. Launch Directors wear black and white "Officials" type shirts (Zebras). By watching their activity, you can often determine which balloons will probably launch next.
- Balloonists and their crews often mistake hams with their radios and vests for launch directors. **NO HAM 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, i.e. "26 UP!"

## **Plano Balloon Festival Launch Field Operation Guidelines**

- When launch is complete or if you need to leave the field, call the Field Marshal for permission to secure. Please do not just leave the field. Return your vest to the net control desk

### **General Information:**

- Launch fieldwork 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).
- If it should ever become 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 the questions as net control asks them. Likely NCS control will move you to another frequency.
- 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 the general public concerning any emergency situations or other high priority or confidential traffic to which our ears are privy. Refer all media/public to Plano Balloon Festival Officials. Keep Mum during and after the event.

**IF YOU HEAR AN AIR HORN BLOW, LEAVE THE FIELD IMMEDIATELY**