

Plano Balloon Festival Recovery Operation Guidelines Rev D

Operators will meet at a designated location approximately one hour prior to scheduled balloon launch.

The location of the site is determined by wind direction and will be announced on the Plano Amateur Radio Klub repeater (147.180, + offset, pl tone 107.2.).

All recovery operators must meet and sign in at the designated “rally” point. At this time you will need to complete an information sheet and obtain a copy of the rules of recovery.

You must have a co-pilot that is at least 12 years old, or has an amateur radio license.

If you do not have a co-pilot sign in at the rally point and an assignment will be made.

All recovery operators should have a VHF transceiver that has an output of at least 25 watts or more. (a dual band vehicle mounted transceiver is highly recommended however not mandatory)

It is highly encouraged that recovery vehicles have an APRS system in place. There should be systems available on a loaner basis if you desire to use one of these systems advanced notice should be given to Tony W5ADC and Robert AD5NR. Please refer to the main event website for additional information on the suggested setting for your APRS equipment.

Motorcycles are not allowed as recovery vehicles. No exceptions.

All traffic laws must be adhered to at all times. (We do not have special privileges whatsoever).

No strobe light bars are allowed. Revolving beacons or directional led light bars are allowed, however the recovery director must clear approval for activation. Under no circumstances should a vehicle utilize any emergency light activation that is traveling over 20 mph.

You cannot step inside private property without owner approval; this should also be cleared by the recovery net control. Just because a balloon chase crew enters onto a property that is not justification for you to follow.

Stations need to observe net control conditions at all times.

A balloon is not down until the envelope is “popped and down”, if you do not understand this terminology than ask one of the recovery staff for further clarification.

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Your co-pilot should be tracking which balloons have been called down, as it is reported over the main recovery frequency.

Do not ask a pilot and/or crew if they have been “called in” they have no idea if they have been called in or not.

Please document the landing location of each balloon that you personally observe that id down and popped. Please turn in the list at the completion of the recovery shift to the staff at the rally point.

We do not have “accidents” and/or “emergencies”; we may have a “situation”. If you personally witness a situation during the festival remain calm and contact the NCS. Most likely you will be moved off frequency to a cell phone for reporting purposes.

If you have an emergency call 911 and follow directions of the public safety personnel, then follow up via cell phone contact w/ recovery staff when it is possible.

Please have local maps for your personal reference however MAPSCO grids are not to be used since not all parties will have access to the MAPSCO products, so actual street/ intersection names should be used.

Check lists and copies of rules and expectations will be given out at every briefing at the recovery rally point.

Please remember to listen twice as much as you talk, and to have fun and be safe.

Upon conclusion of the flight, all Recovery Teams will be required to clear with the Recovery Net Controller and may be asked to return to a common rally point.

Two Zone Recovery Communications Procedures

The recovery team will continue to use the Two-Zone method for managing the recovery and tracking of balloonists. This method depends on the operators switching to another controlled net as balloons cross a particular geographic boundary. The preliminary boundary is defined in the map below. This is also shown on the supplied APRS maps. All nets will be controlled and operated by separate NCS operators. As a balloon crosses the inner/outer boundary, check out of the Recovery Inner Zone Net and check in to the Recovery Outer Zone Net. The frequencies of the nets are defined within the event Radio Communications Plan.

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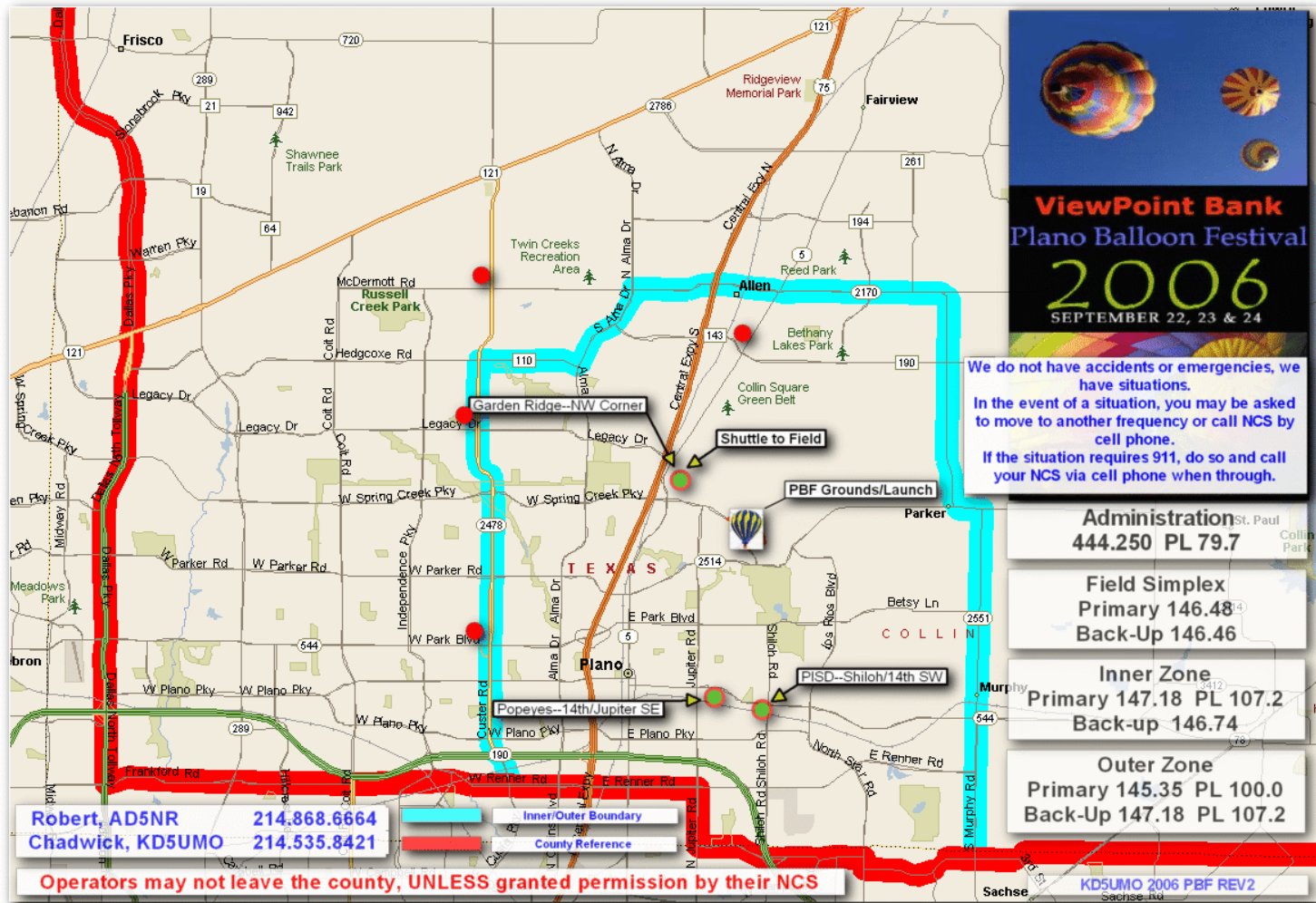
Make sure that you are checked in to one net only. Observe proper net protocol at all times. All nets will be directed nets with a NCS. When your assignment is complete, you will most likely be asked to check back into Recovery Inner Zone Net and continue back to the original staging location.

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. Net Condition 3 is defined as:

CONDITION 3

Condition 3 identifies the condition where situations exist that present a greater potential threat than Condition 4 to life and/or property. In weather related situations, Condition 3 is equivalent to a "watch" condition. Open reporting except in the case of emergencies or the existence of extremely dangerous or vary rapidly changing conditions cease in Condition 3. The net is conducted in a limited reporting and more highly directed fashion. The NCS should manage the net in a much more highly restricted fashion with reports being taken under NCS direction only unless a true emergency exists. Instead of acting to control report taking as in Condition 4, the NCS in Condition 3 is truly in control of the development and management of all communications resources that are to be used in the conduct of the net for the duration of Condition 3 or until the net condition is reduced to Condition 4.

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Preliminary Inner/Outer Zone Map – Check Website for Final Versions and APRS Maps