

BALLOONING TERM DEFINITIONS

Pilots Discretion – You will often hear this word when it comes to ballooning events and ballooning in general. Ballooning is a very weather dependent sport and if winds are high or storms are in the area, Pilots could deem conditions are not safe to fly. They may determine they will fly but they don't want to take passengers for safety reasons. Even if the sun is shining and it appears to be a great day, winds could still play a factor on any ballooning activity. This is primarily a concern for their landings. In an event where flying on or around a lake is concerned even no winds aloft can cause a planned flight to be cancelled. When landing pilots like to have wind speeds on the ground around 5 miles per hour or less.

Ballooning Wind Speeds – Wind is the most critical factor in safe ballooning; it effects every phase of a flight. More balloon flights are cancelled due to wind than for any other reason. Balloons fly best in light and stable winds of 4 – 6 miles per hour. Maximum safe winds are 8 – 10 miles per hour.

Surface Winds – Winds that you can feel. Winds on the surface is just one of the pilots concerns. This is what can be most confusing to spectators and potential passengers. There may not be a hint of a breeze on the ground but winds aloft might be faster and high winds at altitude can be enough to cancel a flight even though the winds on the ground are light or non-existent.

Winds Aloft – A fancy forecasting term for wind speed and temperatures at certain altitudes. This forecast is specifically used for aviation purposes. It tells the pilots if they might encounter issues such as wind shear, turbulence or even strong surface winds later on.

Crew Chief – Someone the pilot generally brings with him or is someone that is in charge of the chase/ground crew, drives the chase vehicle, coordinates the balloon inflating and launch and is in contact with the pilot throughout the flight. They are the go to person for the pilots before, during and after the flight.

Ground/Chase Crew – Are generally volunteers or even sponsors of a particular balloon. They help set up the balloon, take part in the chase by riding in the chase vehicle (or following along in their vehicle) and then help with packing the balloon back up after the balloon has landed. A fun way to be involved in ballooning.

Chase Vehicle – This is the vehicle that holds all the equipment for the balloonist. After setting up and launching the balloon, the vehicle loads up unused equipment, chase crew and then follows the balloonist. Depending on size of chase vehicle sometimes others may have to drive their own vehicle in pursuit of the balloon.

Balloon Glow – All the balloons inflate in a central location. They do not leave the ground (on some occasions tethered rides will be given). At dusk the balloons light up their burners creating a neat colorful experience. Sometimes they glow to music or on command.

Flicker Burn – All the pilots do propane bursts giving the impression of flickering lights. This is done during the glow.

All Burn – All pilots light up their balloons continually for a period of time. This is done during the glow.

Media Flight – A flight often used at the beginning of the event sometimes even the night before. Area media & some dignitaries are invited to fly in a balloon. This flight is to try and get some publicity for the rest of the weekends balloon. By offering a media flight, area media will publicize the event in their papers, on TV news, on the radio or various places online and through social media.

Sponsor/Fun Flight – Sponsors of the balloon, own their particular balloon during the balloon event and they are allowed to utilize the balloon for two of the three flights. Even though Pilots only guarantee one rider per balloon, Balloonist can generally take up to two average sized people in their basket depending on size of basket and weather conditions.

Balloon Envelope – The envelope is usually made from **rip-stop nylon** to help prevent tears from getting too big. Envelopes may also be made from **polyester** and other fabrics. The lower portion of the balloon is made from materials such as **Nomex**, a fire resistant material. The envelope is tied off to the basket then is partially inflated with cold air from a gas-powered fan, then heated up with propane burners for final inflation.

Balloon Basket – The Baskets are commonly made of woven **wicker** or **rattan**. These materials have proven to be sufficiently light, strong, and durable for balloon flight. Such baskets are usually rectangular or triangular in shape. The basket holds the pilot, extra propane tanks, other needed equipment and passengers if pilot allows them.

Cold Inflation – The process of filling the envelope with cold air. A commercial gas powered fan is used to partially inflate the balloon envelope.

Hot Inflation – Heating up the envelope with propane burners until the balloon stands vertical/upright.

Crown Line – Rope attached to the top of the balloon used to control inflation and deflation. Generally the Crew Chief will handle this or assign someone to handle this. Essentially the person on the crown line acts as anchor for the rising balloon.

Non-Flight Crew Volunteer – These are people who help in other phases of a balloon event and generally assist with the on-site coordination. Acting as scoring judges, work sign in tables for crew help and passengers, helping with morning coffee/beverage and snacks set up, assisting at the propane refill station, running hospitality tent at the cookout glow, assisting with tethered ride tickets and kids area tickets & others as assigned or needed.