



DUTCH  
SAFETY BOARD

# Summary

## Uncontrolled landing in strong winds

Schroeder Fire Balloons G 34/24



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*The Hague, November 2020*

*The reports issued by the Dutch Safety Board are open to the public and available on [www.safetyboard.nl](http://www.safetyboard.nl).*

*Cover photo: National Police.*

## **The Dutch Safety Board**

When accidents or disasters happen, the Dutch Safety Board investigates how it was possible for these to occur, with the aim of learning lessons for the future and, ultimately, improving safety in the Netherlands. The Safety Board is independent and is free to decide which incidents to investigate. In particular, it focuses on situations in which people's personal safety is dependent on third parties, such as the government or companies. In certain cases the Board is under an obligation to carry out an investigation. Its investigations do not address issues of blame or liability.

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N.B. The full report is published in the Dutch language. If there is a difference in interpretation between the Dutch report and English summary, the Dutch text will prevail.

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# GENERAL OVERVIEW

Identification number:	2019073
Classification:	Accident
Date, time of occurrence:	31 August 2019, 20.15 hours <sup>1</sup>
Location of occurrence:	Swalmen, the Netherlands
Registration:	PH-HPJ
Aircraft type:	Schroeder Fire Balloons G 34/24
Aircraft category:	Hot air balloon
Type of flight:	Commercial balloon flight with passengers
Phase of operation:	Landing
Damage to aircraft:	Fire damage to the scoop
Flight crew:	One
Passengers:	Three
Injuries:	Three passengers slightly injured
Other damage:	Damage to a fence
Light conditions:	Daylight

<sup>1</sup> All times in this report are local times unless indicated otherwise.

## SUMMARY

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The pilot of the hot air balloon, which had three passengers on board, was forced to make a landing due to rapidly deteriorating weather conditions. In doing so, the balloon ended up in weather conditions that endangered the safety of the occupants. After several landing attempts, the balloon eventually came to a halt with the envelope against a tree line after a landing in which the basket skidded over the ground. During the landing, first the passengers fell out of the balloon's basket. Hereafter, the pilot partly fell out of the balloon's basket. The passengers sustained minor injuries.

The weather conditions caught the pilot by surprise because he had paid insufficient attention to the weather forecast during the flight preparations. The weather forecasts specifically prepared for hot air ballooning mentioned high-risk weather conditions. These weather forecasts were not consulted by the pilot. Sources he did consult also indicated unfavourable circumstances, but these were not interpreted as such by him. The decision to carry out the flight was therefore based on an incomplete and outdated weather forecast.

Because of the vulnerability of hot air balloons and its occupants, there are clear requirements for consulting weather information before the flight. Because the weather is changeable, it is necessary to follow weather developments during the day. To do this, as many sources as possible must be used, but in particular the weather forecasts specifically prepared for hot air ballooning.

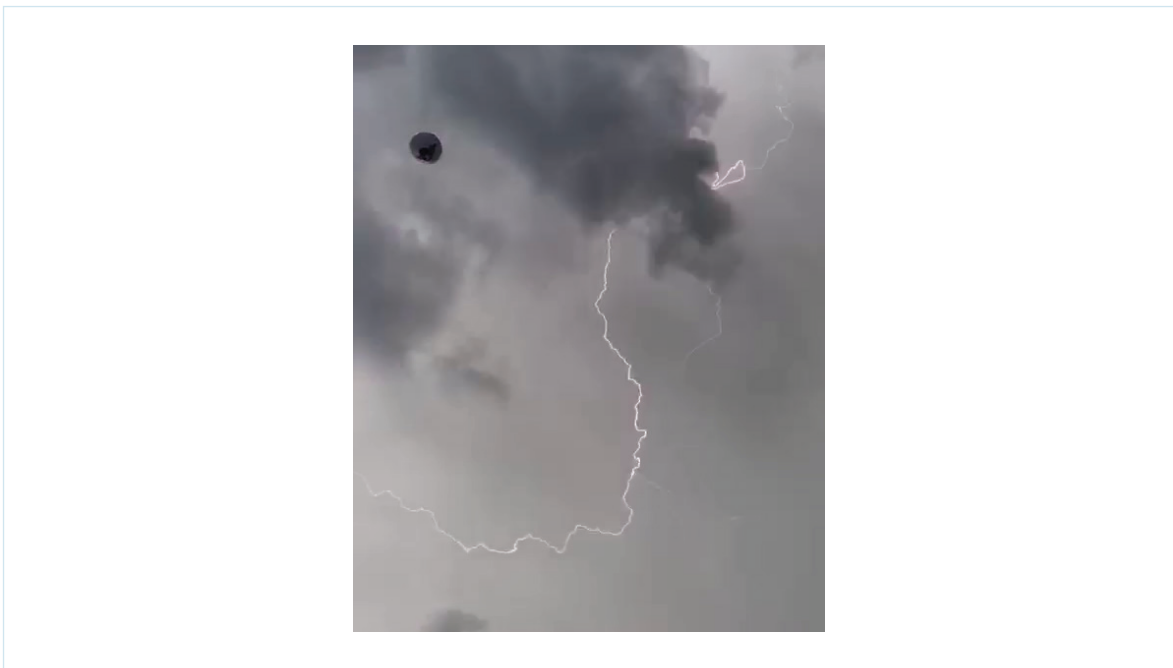


Figure 1 - Lightning discharge near the hot air balloon. (Source: National Police)

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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The assessment of whether a hot air balloon flight can be performed safely depends mainly on correct and up-to-date information about current and expected weather conditions. Passengers must be able to assume that a flight will only be performed if it is safe to do so.

*To the Royal Netherlands Aeronautical Association (KNVvL):*

1. Bring the lessons from this accident to the attention of your members, and point out to them the procedure to follow when consulting the weather forecasts in preparation for a balloon flight. As part of good balloon airmanship, indicate which sources must be used and include them in the standard format of the Ballooning Operations Manual.

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