



CHASE CREW HANDBOOK

CREW MEMBER NAME: _____

PILOT'S NAME: _____

BALLOON NAME: _____

PILOT PHONE NUMBER: _____

The Havasu Balloon Festival Committee welcomes you and appreciates your participation in our Festival. Without your generous support and cooperation as a volunteer crew-member this balloon festival would not be possible.

As a chase crew-member, over the next few days please keep in mind that you are a representative of not only the Havasu Balloon Festival, but also the 'Spirit of Ballooning' in our community. Your conduct both on and off the field are important to the continued success of this event and of ballooning in Lake Havasu.

Our relationship with the community is a vital component of the festival and its continued existence. Please follow and maintain the highest level of conduct and diligent attention to safety.

This Handbook is designed to provide some essential Do's and Don'ts while crewing. We strongly recommend that you keep a copy of this Handbook with you in your chase vehicle for reference.

While the list is not all-inclusive, it is designed as a guide to promote SAFETY for all involved.

Even if you have crewed before, please take time to familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook.

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING!

DO'S AND DON'TS WHILE CREWING:

CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS:

- **DO** wear sturdy, flat shoes/boots with good traction (boots are the preferred footwear).
- **DO** wear or bring along a 'long-sleeved' jacket or shirt (NOT nylon). If you are assigned to the 'mouth' of the balloon, you should always wear long sleeves as the burners put off a great deal of radiant heat.
- **DO** wear gloves for those tasks that require hand protection and when required by your Pilot or Crew Chief. You will be asked to wear your gloves for MOST tasks.
- **DO NOT** wear synthetic (Nylon) outer clothing/jackets. Synthetic fabric can create static electricity (particularly in this dry climate). The propane on board is volatile and could potentially be ignited if sparked by static electricity.
- **DO NOT** wear scarves, other types of loose clothing or clothing with loose draw-strings that could become entangled in ropes or most importantly, FAN blades.

WHILE ON THE FIELD:

- **DO** keep an eye out for Pilot and/or Crew Chief at all times; be prepared for things and conditions to change.

- **DO** wait for the Pilot or Crew Chief to tell you what they want you to do. Each Pilot operates differently. If you aren't sure what or how to do something, don't be afraid to ask.
- **DO NOT** take it upon yourself to make those decisions.
- **DO NOT** pull on or step on the balloon fabric. Always handle the envelope by the load tapes (if you aren't sure where those are, ask). NEVER pull on the fabric of the balloon without using a load tape (for any reason). NEVER step on the balloon envelope as it can scuff a hole in the fabric. ANY tear in the balloon will require inspection and may prevent a flight or inflation.
- **DO NOT** let anyone walk on the balloon fabric.
- **DO NOT** wrap ropes around your hands or wrists at any time.
- **DO NOT** tilt or move the FAN while it is running.
- **DO NOT** stand or lean near a running FAN with loose clothing, objects or long hair!
- **DO NOT** drink alcohol before or during crewing operations.
- **DO NOT** smoke or allow anyone to smoke near the balloon. Tanks in the basket contain PROPANE and are highly volatile. In addition, smoke ashes can melt holes in the fabric of the balloon.
- **DO NOT** bring young children to crew with you *unless* you have someone (not on the crew) to watch them. Having to keep an eye on your Pilot and/or Crew Chief, the balloon itself and nearby spectators is enough to handle. Being responsible for a small child would detract from your ability to crew safely.

LAUNCHING THE BALLOON:

- **DO** make sure to get your Pilot's phone number in case of emergency or should you lose radio contact during a balloon flight (write his/her number on the front of this handbook and keep it in the vehicle during chase). Give your Pilot at least one crew-members phone number for the same reason.
- **DO** listen to your Pilot and obey his/her instructions at all times. The Launch Director gives directions to the Pilot. If the Pilot questions the safety of the launch, he/she will work with the Launch Director to resolve the concern.
- **DO** stand to the sides and rear of the balloon basket (up wind) during the launch. NEVER stand directly in front of ANY balloon's flight path.
- **DO** ensure that the balloon is tied off to the chase vehicle BEFORE the inflation process begins (tie-offs are MANDATORY for all balloon inflations).
- **DO** let the Pilot or Crew Chief know if you see or hear anything that does not look right – the Pilot may have missed seeing or hearing it, or not noticed it due to concentrating on other tasks.
- **DO** your job when assigned by the Pilot or Crew Chief – do not ask another crew-member to do your job. In this situation a task can be overlooked leading to a breach of safety. This can put the safety of the flight at risk or result in equipment being damaged.
- **NEVER - UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES LET YOUR FEET LEAVE THE GROUND!** Once a balloon has been cleared for launch a pilot may request 'hands on' or 'weight on' –

understand what that means. But, should the balloon take off while you are holding onto it in any way, once you feel like it will be out of reach **LET GO!**

- **DO NOT** let the Pilot launch without making sure that you have **KEYS** to the chase vehicle.

LEAVING THE LAUNCH FIELD:

- **DO** secure all equipment in the chase vehicle and trailer before leaving the launch site. Check that nothing is left behind.
- **DO** check that the immediate area is clear before driving the chase vehicle. **ALWAYS** check in front, behind, (when pulling a trailer) between the vehicle and trailer and, check fenders before moving your chase vehicle. It is best to have a crew-member check and WALK in front of the vehicle clearing spectators when arriving to or leaving the field. **DO NOT shout at spectators to move** – be courteous but clear that you need to bring a moving vehicle through the area. **Drive SLOWLY at all times on the launch field.** There will likely be a speed limit for leaving the launch area – obey it at all times.
- **DO NOT** drive over another balloons crown line. Make sure it is clear to drive around another balloon that has not yet inflated or launched.

DURING THE CHASE:

- **DO** familiarize yourself with the balloon you will be chasing. Know the colors and pattern.
- **DO** remember that there is normal traffic (people going about their day). Do not impede other drivers. If it is necessary to park your chase vehicle, make sure that you are out of the way of normal traffic. If you find yourself driving too slowly for regular traffic, pull off to the shoulder.
- **DO** (as a chase driver) keep your eye on the road at all times. At some point you may find yourself chasing into the sun. Remember there are often residents walking along the sides of the streets at that time of the morning and they are difficult to see looking into the sun. Let other crew-members monitor where the balloon is above you.
- **DO** assign the task of Navigation to another crew-member in the vehicle if possible. It is simpler to focus on driving if you are assisted by someone who is in charge of navigating the streets.
- **DO** obey ALL traffic laws and speed limits (particularly in School Zones) during chase. Remember, just because you are chasing a balloon does not mean you are more important than or different than any other vehicle on the street.
- **DO** use your radio as instructed by your Pilot or Crew Chief. Keep transmission to a minimum.
- **DO NOT** drive onto private property without first getting permission (if possible) from the homeowner or tenant.

RECOVERING THE BALLOON:

- **DO** park the chase vehicle with the doors closed and out of the way of traffic.
- **DO** wait until the vehicle comes to a stop before getting out.
- **DO** listen to and follow your Pilot's instructions for landing and pack-up.
- **DO** stay to the sides and rear of the basket during landing. ALWAYS remain clear of the balloon's flight path.
- **DO** (when using streets for landing and pack-up) move the balloon (and/or tarp) out of the street as quickly as possible. Try to allow normal traffic flow as much and quickly as possible during pack-up.

BALLOON EQUIPMENT AND HANDLING:

Each Pilot has a different balloon system and different ways of setting up his/her balloon. It is important to check how your Pilot wants balloon operations handled for cold and hot inflation, as well as deflation and pack-up.

Even if you have crewed before (once or many times), it is important to ask for and follow the specific instructions of your current pilot.

FAN:

- The fan is one of the most hazardous pieces of equipment in ballooning. **There are stories of crew-members and spectators who have gotten scarves, clothing and even hair caught in fan blades resulting in injuries and in one known case, fatality. IT IS IMPORTANT that a crew-member stay with and monitor a running fan at ALL times.** Make sure that spectators are well clear of a fan in operation -- ALWAYS.
- **Familiarize yourself with how to SHUT OFF the fan.** Fan blades have been known to disintegrate or come in contact with the fan cage, throwing bits of the fan out at high speed. Should this occur, **TURN OFF THE FAN IMMEDIATELY.**
- If you are assigned to the fan, make sure that you understand when and how the Pilot wants you to reduce the speed of the fan or turn it off. **Often a Pilot will have a signal for turning down or turning off the fan during inflation – make sure you know what that is before the inflation begins.**
- **Never move a running fan.** Always make sure the fan is completely off before moving it away from the basket.

CROWN LINE:

- The purpose of the crown line:
 - Stabilizes the envelope during cold inflation. If winds should increase or change direction during cold inflation the crown line acts as an anchor, keeping the balloon as stationary as possible.
 - Keeps the balloon in place as the hot inflation fills the envelope. Ideally the envelope should fill out firmly with cold air before it starts to rise off the ground.

However, some pilots may begin a hot inflation before the balloon is fully packed with cold air. In this situation the envelope may be very soft and deformed as that balloon comes up. This can result in the mouth of the balloon collapsing or drawing the bottom of the balloon up into the burner, making it difficult for the pilot to introduce heat without damaging the envelope. Tension on the crown line helps to keep that from happening.

- Steadies the rise of the balloon during hot inflation, keeping it from coming up too quickly. If the balloon comes up too quickly the envelope will develop a 'rock' making it difficult for the pilot to maintain control of the balloon.
- Check with your current Pilot or Crew Chief on how they want you to handle the crown line (even if you have worked with the crown line before on other balloons).
- Keep hold of the crown line until the Pilot instructs you to bring it to the basket. Do not let go of the crown line during hot inflation as this allows the balloon to rise too rapidly and become 'out of control'.
- NEVER wrap the crown line around your hand or wrist.

RADIOS:

- Each Pilot travels with his/her set of radios. Make sure you know how to operate your radio before your Pilot launches.
- Test your radio with your Pilot's radio prior to launch to make sure that the radios are operational and communicating with one another.
- You may find that other Pilots and crew-members are using the same type of radios with the same frequency. Since this interferes with each of your ability to communicate, **it is important that you keep radio conversation between you and your Pilot to essential and brief communications.**

LANDOWNER AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

Good landowner and community relations are essential to the continued success of any balloon festival. It is important that you make the landowner and/or spectator experience a positive one.

Always be courteous and friendly with homeowners and spectators.

Should you have any issues with Land/Homeowners be courteous and calm and if necessary, call the Landowner Relations phone number on the back of your Crew Badge.

REMEMBER - SAFETY FIRST - ALWAYS!!