

Hot Air for Hope Balloon Festival

OPERATIONS MANUAL

**May 15-17, 2026
Lampe Park
Gardnerville, NV**

This manual has been prepared as part of the application for the issuance of a Certificate of Waiver with attachments and special provisions for a Free Balloon Competition on May 15-17, 2026. Hot Air for Hope Balloon Festival

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Hot Air for Hope Balloon Festival (HAFHBF) Specific Rules

- 1. Each pilot and their balloon must be officially registered with the HAFHBF.**
- 2.** Pilots may be required to fly and display assigned official HAFHBF basket banners for each sponsor/partner as provided during the event.
- 3.** The festival will provide propane for all scheduled events, including tethered rides & glows. Pilots agree to arrive at every event with full propane tanks.
- 4. MASTER PILOT BRIEFINGS** will be held **Thursday, May 14, 2026**, time and location to be determined. **ALL PILOTS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND.** If a pilot(s) are not able to attend, a supplemental briefing will be provided.
- 5. SPONSOR RIDES:** Non-corporate pilots will be responsible for providing rides for sponsor/partner representatives during the course of the HAFHBF as a condition of participation. Should a pilot volunteer to carry any event staff, volunteers, or others on their own, it will NOT be considered a sponsor ride, unless otherwise cleared by the HAFHBF.
- 6. INSURANCE:** All pilots MUST have in full force a balloon insurance policy with \$100,000 minimum property damage, \$100,000 minimum passenger liability for each passenger and \$1,000,000 minimum combined single limit liability coverage.

PURPOSE

This manual is submitted as part of an application for a certificate of waiver under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) Part 91, Sections 91.119(b) and (c) by and for the Hot Air for Hope Balloon Festival. Specifically, the waiver will allow officially registered balloons to operate at an altitude of no less than 500 feet above the highest obstacle within a 500-foot radius of the balloon enroute to the target within 5 statute miles of the designated launch field or goal. Within 650 feet of the declared goal, flight is allowed at no less than 75 feet AGL from any open-air assembly of persons. Within 200 feet of the goal, flight is allowed down to the surface. Actual touchdown of the aircraft is not allowed within 200 feet of a goal. The waiver will allow flight over open water or sparsely populated areas no closer than 200 feet to any person, vessel, vehicle, or structure. This Waiver and Authorization has been issued for aircraft and pilots that are officially registered in the Hot Air for Hope Balloon Festival and participating in any Hot Air for Hope Balloon Festival events.

RESPONSIBILITIES

a) Duties of Personnel

1) Event Director/Balloon Meister/Launch Commander: **Greg Nelson**

The Event Director/Balloon Meister/Launch Commander functions as the overall director of flight operations for the event. To ensure smooth operation of the event he will ascertain that all equipment is available for scoring, crowd control, communications, and flight operations. The Launch Commander will assign launch director duties to trained staff or conduct this task himself. He also coordinates with the FAA and local agencies and has jurisdiction in all matters of flight safety. In the event of an emergency, he will be responsible for all emergency services at the race until a safety officer assumes command as a public officer from law enforcement, EMS or Fire arrives on scene and establishes command.

2) Operations Director: **Jason Smith**

The Operations Director functions as the main manager of operations. He works in partnership with the Event Director in planning, directing, coordinating, and managing all tasks mentioned above. He will also coordinate with the Event Director in the representation of the event, its policies, people, and perceived business. He will oversee the organization of all tasks, duties and assignments concerning the safe operation of the balloons in conjunction with the event.

3) FAA Liaison/Chief Competition Officer/Chief Scoring Officer: **Allen Anderson**

The FAA Liaison/Chief Competition Officer/Chief Scoring Officer duties are to ensure that each selected task is conducted as safely as possible for both the pilots and spectators. He will accomplish this by choosing safe target areas that can be secured from the public. Individuals will be assigned to assist daily with scoring and as security at the target goals. He is responsible for scoring the competitors fairly and accurately and will completely record all results. As

FAA Liaison he will be the primary contact person for all matters relating to the FAA. He will make himself accessible and available to all FAA staff.

4) Landowner Relations Officer: **Sheldon Grauberger**

The Landowner Relations Officer is responsible for coordinating and maintaining positive relationships with private property owners and members of the public whose property or activities may be affected by balloon operations. He will serve as the primary point of contact for landowners or members of the public who may have questions, concerns, or complaints regarding balloons flying over, landing on, or operating in the area. His duties include providing information about how balloon operations are conducted and helping to address or resolve any concerns in a professional and respectful manner. The Landowner Relations Officer will also work with event staff to promote respect for private property and maintain positive community relations throughout the event to ensure the continued goodwill and cooperation of local residents and landowners.

5) Weather Officer: **Dan Gudgel**

The Weather Officer's duties are to monitor all activities of the event to assure the event is conducted at the highest practical level of safety regarding weather. His duties will focus on the local site weather conditions and the expected weather during the flight operations period. Other relevant data and observations will be presented. Current observations and area forecasts will be obtained directly from the weather office. The weather officer will maintain close coordination with the Event Director, Chief Safety Officer and associated staff members as well as brief the pilots about the weather.

6) Chief Safety Officer: **Lori Anderson**

In the event of an emergency, the Safety Officer will be responsible for all emergency services at the race until a public officer from law enforcement, EMS or Fire arrives on scene and establishes command. The Safety Officer will also monitor all balloon operations to assure that they are being done in accordance with the highest practical level of safety, both on and off the field. Duties include briefing launch directors, officials, and pilots on routine and potential safety concerns for the day's operations, maintaining an open line of communication with the staff and pilots regarding any potential safety concerns.

PILOT IN COMMAND: See list provided with this document and updated on site.

All participating pilots are responsible for:

1. The safe operation of their aircraft both in the air and on the ground as it pertains to all applicable portions of 14 CFR, approved waiver, and race rules.
2. Briefing all crewmembers as to their specific duties including safety, inflation and deflation and other associated operations.
3. Obtaining and providing signed crewmember manifests.

4. To obtain all available weather-related information as defined in 14CFR91.103.
5. For all operations which will be conducted in accordance with TC Data Sheet limitations, Approved flight manual limitations and operating limitations.

FLIGHT CREW MEMBERS:

All crewmembers, whether involved with flight or ground operations, will be responsible for inflation, deflation, safety, and other duties as designated and briefed by the pilot in command. Each event crew member must sign the waiver form supplied by the pilot prior to launch. Each event crewmember must attest that they have attended the applicable briefing by the pilot in command.

AIRCRAFT AND PILOT REGISTRATION

All pilots participating in the event will attest that they have the following prior to launch:

1. Pilot certificate.
2. Pilot logbook showing flight currency per 14 CFR 61.57 applicable for the flight dates listed.
3. Pilot logbook showing current flight review per 14 CFR 61.56 (if not included in #2 above).
4. Aircraft registration certificate.
5. Aircraft airworthiness certificate.
6. Aircraft logbook showing annual/100 hr inspection, or for experimental balloons a copy of the annual condition inspection, that will be current during the period of the event.
7. Photo Identification. (photo must be legible)

These documents may be reviewed by the FAA or their designee prior to and/or during the event as requested. Any pilot or aircraft issue not corrected at the registration may prevent that pilot from participation in the entire event. Any open pilot or aircraft issue must be resolved with the FAA prior to launch.

FAA inspectors may inspect any aircraft at any time to determine airworthiness certificate and/or pilot qualifications. Compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations is the responsibility of the Pilot in Command of the aircraft.

PILOT BRIEFINGS

Before each flight, all pilots must attend the flight briefing. The briefing will contain, but may not be limited to the following information:

1. Pilot roll call

2. Meteorological synopsis, surface winds and winds aloft
3. Details of prohibited zones and sensitive zones
4. Emergency procedures on and off the field
5. Name of competitive task(s) (if called)
6. Task data & target closure times
7. Any variations or supplements to the published task/race rules
8. Emergency procedures on and off the field
9. Launch period
10. Launch area/sequence
11. Time check

SPECTATOR AREAS

The primary spectator area is located at the official launch site (see attached site map). Spectators are allowed to watch from any field as directed by the pilot. Spectators will be allowed on foot, onto the launch fields at the beginning of the event, and throughout the waiver period. Temporary barriers or security personnel will be used to secure spectators from potential low-level flight areas surrounding goals/targets. As needed, announcements will be made throughout the event over the public-address system, advising the spectators of the requirements and dangers possible, while on the field during various balloon operation phases.

DESIGNATED SPECTATOR AREA (75' MINIMUM FLIGHT) 14 CFR 91.119(b) is waived to allow flight over, but no closer than 75 feet to persons in the designated spectator area(s) which are under the direct control of the Hot Air for Hope Balloon Festival only during the launch.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency, either on the field or off, call 911. If you have an emergency on the field, call 911 first if you feel it is needed, then locate an event official, or send a crew person to alert the Event Director or Safety Official. In case of an emergency in which the event is canceled and the pilots have already launched, the field is closed, the target is closed, or everyone is instructed to get out of the air immediately, the following will occur.

1. The target will be placed in the shape of a **V** instead of an **X**.
2. All crew members on the field will be advised to advise their pilots to land immediately or advised of the situation and PIC will decide on the next safest action.
3. The Chief Safety Officer or Event Director and /or designee will start calling all pilots and/or crew members by radio and/or cell phone and provide an update and suggested action.

In the event of an emergency where medical attention is needed, please clear the area, and assist in keeping spectators back so that the emergency personnel can get to the area.

LANDOWNER RELATIONS/NOTIFICATION

All pilots must obtain permission for landing and launches if private property is involved. Landowners may request that their property be indicated on the official map as prohibited zones or sensitive zones.

FLIGHT OPERATIONS

AREA OF OPERATIONS

The operations will occur within a 5-mile radius of the launch field located at Lampe Park in Gardnerville, Nevada. Final takeoffs and landings may occur beyond these boundaries. Headquarters for the event will be located at the launch field.

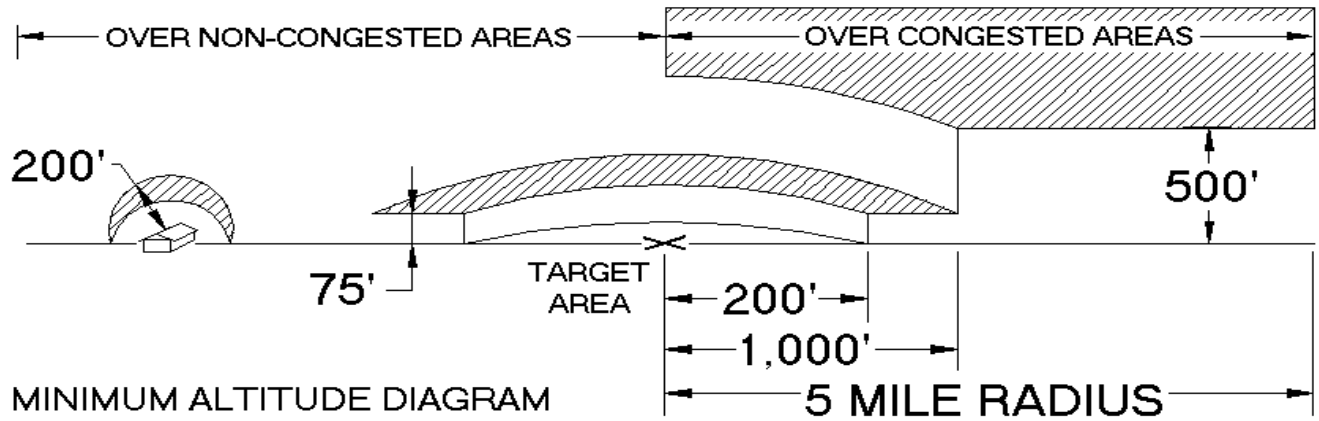
TYPES OF OPERATIONS

The event will consist of single and multiple tasks as called by the Chief Competition Officer after consultation with other approved competition officials and the Event Director, as appropriate, considering the conditions at hand and forecast to develop during the anticipated flight times. The included tasks are listed in the rules attached:

ALTITUDES

The waiver provides that registered balloons will be allowed to make approaches to the goals/targets within the designated areas. Balloons making these approaches will be permitted to fly at no less than **75 feet AGL** 1,000 feet away from the center of the target. The balloons must have attained level flight at no less than **75 ft AGL** and must not be descending prior to entering the 1,000-foot radius circle around the target.

DIAGRAM 1: MINIMUM ALTITUDE FOR TARGETS



WEATHER REQUIREMENTS

The basic requirements will be VFR per 14 CFR 91.155. The event is not authorized if visibility is less than 3 miles, or the ceiling is less than 2,000 ft. AGL at the time of intended launch. Launch will not be started if the surface winds are greater than 8 MPH. The decision for flight is the sole responsibility of the Pilot in Command once the event is considered as go. The decision of whether to halt the event at any time is the sole responsibility of the Event Director when recommended or after consultation with appropriate safety officials.

GENERAL RACE RULES

1. For this event we will be using the 2026 HAFH Rules_v1.0. These rules align with the Balloon Federation of America (BFA) 2025 HACD Competition Rules. All pilots have received a copy and have been asked to review them prior to the event. There is also a pdf copy attached here.
2. Only registered pilots who have been briefed and signed the waiver may fly in the event. No alternate pilots are allowed unless they are listed in the waiver, have signed the waiver, been briefed, and are approved by the Event Director/Launch Commander or Safety Officer prior to the flight.
3. All registered pilots must attend the morning preflight briefings. The preflight briefings will include a roll call of pilots, weather conditions, discussion of any restricted landing areas, reminder of the procedure to request permission to land from landowners, and reminder for the chase crews to minimize the disturbance to landowners, such as limiting one chase vehicle on the landowner's property, and for the chase crews to obey all local traffic regulations.
4. Only "Balloon Event Flight Crew members" may be flown during the event. This is described in the operations manual on page 5.
5. **Compensation.** Airmen may not receive any type of compensation for flight activities at this balloon event, unless it meets the criteria described on page 10 under compensation for both commercial and private pilots.
6. Due to congestion on the field, and in the interest of safety, all balloons must be tied off during inflation. By "tied off", it means that the balloons have a safety line from a stable position on the balloon basket to their chase vehicle. The tie off is not to be tied to a balloon trailer.
7. No balloons will begin inflation until released to do so by the race officials.
8. Rules are subject to change or alteration by the Race Officials due to changes in flight conditions, weather conditions, and other considerations. Any changes will be announced at the pilot briefing.
9. There will be no venting of raw propane on the launch field at any time.
10. No smoking is allowed on the field, in the parking area, or by the propane refill station.
11. While filling propane tanks, all tanks must be secured during the fill process.
12. Pilots must not be in the basket during the refuel process.

Compensation

If an airman receives any type of compensation for flight activities at a balloon event, that airman must hold at least a Commercial Pilot Certificate. Second-class medical certificates may be required if medical certification is required for the aircraft being operated. The aircraft must be certificated for operations that allow compensation or hire. Additionally, if passengers or property are carried for compensation or hire, the aircraft must be certificated to allow for those types of operations.

- 1)** Propane and rooms supplied to all participants at a balloon event (e.g., event entry fee) is not considered to be receiving compensation under 14 CFR part 61, § 61.113.
- 2)** Other items (e.g., meals and lodging) that are provided and are not conditioned on the pilot flying at the event are not considered compensation under § 61.113.
- 3)** The pilot may be required to give a ride to a member of the press, organizer's committee, or one of the sponsors for the event. If none of these people have paid for a ride, except the sponsor, who may have donated resources for the event to take place, and the pilot does not receive any additional compensation for taking the passenger above and beyond what is given to all other participants, then the pilot is not operating an aircraft that is carrying passengers for compensation or hire.
- 4)** Prize money awarded based on competition is not considered compensation.

'Small Unmanned Aircraft System' (sUAS)

If a certified airman who meets all the FAA requirements and registers with the event and has a Remote Pilot Certificate for an 'Small Unmanned Aircraft System' (sUAS) and it is agreed that the operation will enhance the Hot Air for Hope event which includes but is not limited to media, photos of events, social media or may help with weather may be permitted to fly anywhere in the waived airspace. Approved personnel with a Remote Pilot Certificate and approved by the FAA to operate a 'Small Unmanned Aircraft System' (sUAS) must be registered with the Hot Air for Hope event 10 days prior to pilot check in. Their name will be forwarded to the FAA prior to the event for validation and must show up for pilot role call every morning. They will be bound by any restrictions applied by the applicable FAR's, FAA personnel or the Hot Air for Hope staff.

PILOT WAIVER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

All pilots who register to participate in the 2026 Hot Air for Hope Balloon Festival will be required to sign in during check-in and the registration process.

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AS A PARTICIPATING PILOT IN THE HOT AIR FOR HOPE BALLOON FESTIVAL, I HAVE READ, UNDERSTAND, AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE 2026 OPERATIONS MANUAL AND THE APPLICABLE CERTIFICATE OF WAIVER, ANY SPECIAL PROVISIONS AND ALL OTHER RULES AND REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO THE RACE. I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT MY VIOLATION OF THE WAIVER AND/OR RACE RULES MAY AFFECT MY STANDINGS IN THE RACE AND/OR THE STATUS OF MY AIRMAN CERTIFICATE IN THE EVENT OF AN FAA RULING.

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE