

Woman died in fall from hot air balloon

by UPI

ALBUQUERQUE -- A woman fell to her death from an airborne gondola in the first fatal accident at the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta in more than a decade. Rosemary Wooley Phillips, 60, of Oceanside, Calif., died and two other passengers suffered broken bones Monday, the Albuquerque Journal reported. The accident occurred after the gondola snagged on a taut utility wire 65 feet high that protects electrical equipment from lightning strikes. The pilot then threw a tether to a dozen bystanders on the ground who engaged in a tug of war to secure the rope to a truck's trailer hitch, the Journal reported Tuesday. The force of the balloon pulling against the tether bowed a 65-foot metal pole supporting the wire, authorities said. Several minutes later, the gondola broke free, the tether ripped and the balloon lurched upward pitching Phillips over the side, the Journal reported. The pilot had years of experience, was licensed to take passengers, and is unlikely to be charged in the accident, the Journal reported.

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