



The logo for "The Great Reno Balloon Race" is displayed. The word "THE" is in red, "GREAT" is in blue, "RENO" is in blue, "BALLOON" is in blue, and "RACE" is in red. Each word is stacked vertically. To the right of the text are six stylized hot air balloons in yellow, red, and blue, arranged in two rows of three. Each balloon has a blue base and a yellow or red top with a mountain range silhouette.

# **THE GREAT RENO BALLOON RACE**

## **OPERATIONS MANUAL**

**September 10 -13, 2026**

**Rancho San Rafael Park  
Reno, NV**

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## **PURPOSE**

The Great Reno Balloon Race (GRBR) will be held September 10-13, 2026.

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), 91.130 (a), (c), and (d) by and for The Great Reno Balloon Race.

Throughout this Operations Manual, the masculine form is used as a standard. Wherever the masculine form is used, it is implied that the feminine form is included.

**§ 91.119 (b) Minimum safe altitudes over a Congested Area.** 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 within 5 statute miles of the designated launch field. Within 1,000 feet of the launch field, a flight is allowed at no less than 75 feet AGL from any open-air assembly of persons. Within 200 feet of the launch field, a flight is allowed down to the surface.

**91.119 (c) Minimum safe altitudes over Other than Congested Areas.** The waiver will allow flight over open water or sparsely populated areas no closer than 200 feet to any person, vessel, vehicle, or structure.

**§ 91.130 (a), (c), (d)Operations in Class C airspace.** Air Traffic Control has authorized operations in the Reno/Tahoe International (airport) Class C airspace without the required communication with the Air Traffic Control Tower during GRBR events. This Waiver and Authorization have been issued for aircraft and pilots that are officially registered in the GRBR and participating in any GRBR events.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **AIR BOSS/BALLOONMEISTER: AARON DIERINGER, KATIE GRIGGS**

The Air Boss and Balloonmeister function as the overall director of flight operations for the event. He/she coordinates with the FAA and local agencies and has jurisdiction in all matters of flight safety. To ensure the smooth operation of the event, he/she will ascertain that all equipment is available for crowd control, communications, and flight operations. He/she will conduct all pilot briefings and, after consultation with the Safety OFFICIAL and the Scoring OFFICIAL, will select the task(s) to be flown.

### **AIR BOSS/BALLOONMEISTER: BARRY VARISCHETTI**

He must monitor all activities of the event to ensure the event is conducted at the highest practical level of safety. He works directly with the Air Boss and Balloonmeister to monitor all activities of the event to ensure it is conducted at the highest level of safety. Duties include attending the morning pilot briefing, briefing launch directors on routine and potential safety concerns for the day's operations, maintaining an open line of communication with the Air Boss and Balloonmeister regarding any potential safety concerns, and in the event of a large-scale accident or mass casualty incident he will become a liaison between launch operations and the GRBR incident commander.

### **RC BALLOON BALLOONMEISTER; MIKE MAUNG**

He is responsible for implementing and carrying out the operational decisions for the Event Director, Air Boss/Balloonmeister, and Chief Safety Official. He coordinates all GRBR RC Balloon flight operations. Coordinates with the officials to ensure that there are no conflicts with other flying or entertainment events on the launch field. Receives weather information from the GRBR weather team to brief the RC pilots and make flight operations decisions best suited for the RC Balloon Event.

### **COMPETITION OFFICIAL: ALLEN ANDERSON**

He must determine the ideal competition task for the wind forecasted and conduct competitions in the safest manner possible.

### **CHIEF SCORING OFFICIAL: SHAWN WAGGONER**

His duties are to ensure that each selected task is conducted fairly, and the results are accurately and completely recorded.

### **WEATHER OFFICIAL: DAN GUDGEL**

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. The weather OFFICIAL will maintain close coordination with Air Boss/Balloonmeister and associated staff members.

### **SCORING:**

These individuals will assist the Chief Scoring OFFICIAL in conducting the assigned flight tasks at all goal locations.

### **LAUNCH DIRECTORS**

These individuals function as assistant safety OFFICIALs whose primary duty is the safety of launch operations. They are identifiable to pilots by easily recognizable apparel worn during launch operations. Each pilot must receive permission to lift off from a launch director.

### **PILOT IN COMMAND:**

All participating pilots are responsible for:

1. All pilots participating in the 2026 GRBR must be registered and approved by the Balloonmeister, Pilot Coordinator, and the Event Director.
2. 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 general rules.
3. Briefing all flight and ground crewmembers as to their specific duties, including safety, inflation and deflation, and all associated operations.
4. Obtaining and providing signed crewmember manifests.
5. Obtain all available weather-related information as defined in 14CFR91.103.

6. All operations shall be conducted in accordance with TC Data Sheet limitations, approved flight manual limitations, and operating limitations.
7. All pilots are required to sign a statement indicating they have read and understand this Operations Manual and Rules and Regulations prior to any inflation in the Event.
8. No one other than a registered Primary or Secondary pilot is allowed to operate any balloon at GRBR.
9. Each Pilot has full and complete authority over the balloon and is responsible for all decisions made associated with the balloon on the ground and in the air. Each Pilot must ensure that their crew, their equipment, and their own level of skill and experience are suitable for the conditions in their own judgement. The pilot is responsible for all the actions of their crew during the event. Briefing all flight and ground crew members as to their specific duties, including safety, inflation and deflation, and all associated operations. Crew members must also be briefed on:
  - a. The location of their balloon system's fire extinguisher(s) while on the launch field.
  - b. Operation of the fan (must be manned at all times while the fan is in operations).
  - c. The pilot or a crew member must maintain control of the tether lines attached to the basket.

### FLIGHT CREW MEMBERS:

All event flight crew members must have received appropriate training concerning their duties relative to the event and must attend the event pilot and flight crewmember briefing before each event. These crew members must sign a statement that they have been briefed and that they are designated event flight crewmembers for the specific event for which the waiver was granted.

### CREW MEMBERS:

All crew members, 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.

Event crew members carried on board during the event must have been briefed by the pilot in command before the flight. Each event crewmember must sign the waiver form supplied by the pilot before launch. Each event crewmember must attest that they have attended the applicable briefing by the pilot in command. Only pilots and event flight crewmembers described in this manual may be carried onboard any balloon operating under the Waiver issued to the Event Organizers.

### AIRCRAFT AND PILOT REGISTRATION:

All pilots participating in the event will complete all entry forms. These include the registration form, pilot agreement, and pilot acknowledgment forms.

Participating pilots must be registered by 10 April 2026. To be registered, the pilot should apply online at [renoballoon.net](http://renoballoon.net). Pilots who have been approved to fly will be required to submit the following paperwork to GRBR before the event. To receive propane or any other form of compensation, pilots will be expected to pay an entry fee at registration.

For aircraft with standard airworthiness certificates:

1. Pilot certificate.
2. Pilot logbook showing flight currency per 14 CFR 61.57 applicable for the 10-13 September 2026 flight dates.
3. Aircraft registration certificate.
4. Aircraft airworthiness certificate.
5. Aircraft logbook showing annual/100 hr. inspection, or for experimental balloons the annual condition inspection, which will be current during the period of the event.
6. Photo Identification. (Must be current).

If the aircraft has an experimental airworthiness certificate, these documents will also be needed:

7. The operating limitations issued with that experimental airworthiness certificate must be submitted as well as the certificate itself, original, (no copies).
8. A program letter.

These documents will be reviewed by the FAA or their designee before the event. Any pilot or aircraft issue not corrected at registration will prevent that pilot from participating in the event. Any open pilot or aircraft issue must be resolved with the FAA and GRBR before the pilot briefing on Thursday morning.

FAA inspectors may inspect any aircraft at any time to determine airworthiness and/or pilot qualification. Compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations is the responsibility of the pilot in command of the aircraft. Aircraft must have on board current registration and airworthiness certificate, originals, not copies, along with the flight manual approved for that aircraft.

Aircraft must not exceed the number of passengers designated by the operating limitations set forth by the manufacturer of said aircraft.

#### **DAMAGE TO A BALLOON:**

Any balloon sustaining damage to the extent of affecting its airworthiness (according to the applicable flight manual), is prohibited from participating or continuing in flight and must land at the first practicable opportunity. If a balloon is damaged during GRBR, it may be flown after damaged components are replaced or repaired and approved for return to service, subject to the approval of the Chief Safety Official.

The Air Boss/Balloonmeister or Chief Safety Official will notify the FAA whenever there is an incident or accident involving a balloon participating in the event.

The Reno Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) will also investigate noncompliance with any Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) and the certificate of waiver issued to the GRBR, in addition to incidents or accidents occurring in conjunction with the event.

#### **PILOT:**

Each pilot must hold the appropriate pilot certificate with Lighter-Than-Air Category and Free Balloon Class Rating. The minimum hours as PIC required for participation in the event are 100 hours. Rising Stars, who are static on the field only, must have a minimum of 75 hours.

## PILOT BRIEFINGS:

All pilots are required to sign a statement indicating that they have read and understood the provisions of the current event waiver and The Great Reno Balloon Race official rules before registration. This acknowledgment form (See page 20) must be submitted and be on file with the organizer before the pilots' first event flight or registration will not be considered complete. Pilots who do not register will not be allowed to participate in the event.

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

1. Pilot roll call (Daily Roll Call sign-in sheets must be signed by PIC.)
2. Meteorological synopsis, surface winds, and winds aloft
3. Air traffic and safety information
4. Details of prohibited zones and sensitive zones
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

## EVENT DOCUMENTATION:

All relevant registration files, pilot registration information, flight crewmember waivers, etc. will be maintained by The Great Reno Balloon Race for at least 30 days after the event and will be made available to the FAA monitor upon request.

## GROUND OPERATIONS

### SPECTATOR AREAS:

The primary spectator area is located at the official launch site. Crowd control is initiated by controlled parking under the direction of the parking officials. Spectator pedestrian traffic will be routed toward the launch fields via a separate route than the incoming balloon chase vehicles and crew traffic. A designated "blanket area" will be identified by a barrier fence for the public to sit down and observe the activities without having to move for balloon operations. Official and balloon chase vehicles are parked in restricted areas. Local police and staff volunteers control traffic. Spectators will be allowed on foot, onto the launch fields at the beginning of the event, and throughout the waiver period. Temporary barriers 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 being 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 Great Reno Balloon Race. (See the area marked in yellow on the map at the end of this document)

Regarding the 75-foot rule, the balloon must have attained a state of altitude equilibrium at this 75-foot minimum altitude and not be descending below 75 feet while crossing over the designated spectator area(s). In addition, landings in the designated spectator area(s) are not allowed without authorization. This rule is in effect, while the waiver is in effect, whether any spectators are present in the area(s).

### LANDING IN A DESIGNATED SPECTATOR AREA:

Landing in a designated spectator area will only be allowed with specific permission. The pilot must call on the aircraft radio (123.75) to request permission to land. Permission will only be granted if the area requested can be secured by Launch Staff and there is enough Launch Staff available to assist in the landing procedure. Driving on the grass in the designated spectator area is not allowed. It will be required to carry all the equipment out of the grassy areas.

### CROWD CONTROL REQUIREMENTS:

GRBR Rangers, Washoe County Parks Department, Washoe County Sheriff's, Washoe County Community Emergency Response Team and Truckee Meadows Fire & Rescue provide crowd control. At and around the Rancho San Rafael Park property, the GRBR Aeronauts and Nevada Barricade will provide additional crowd control with personnel and appropriate barricades and signage.

### EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:

In the event of an emergency, either on the field or off, please call 911. If a pilot has an emergency on the field, locate a launch director, or send a crew person to the stage to alert the Air Boss/Balloonmeister. All launch and safety personnel have radios, with communication to Emergency Services Director (ESD), Washoe County Sheriff's Department, REMSA, and Truckee Meadows Fire & Rescue, and can direct the appropriate help. In the event of an emergency, depending on the severity, the ESD will take charge. The ESD will contact the appropriate emergency responders and direct them.

GRBR Rangers will be patrolling the field/park and will be first responders to emergencies/incidents quickly. If the Fire Department is needed, the Washoe County Sheriff's Office sergeant can request their presence via the Emergency Dispatch system. Sheriffs will assess the situation and contact the appropriate emergency response team as to the location of the emergency and the appropriate gate to be used to get the safety vehicles onto the field nearest the emergency.

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) are available on Rancho San Rafael Park during launches, stationed near the stage on the South side of the park.

During the event, a site plan map will be posted on the launch official's trailer, with entrances onto the field, locations of fencing, emergency access lanes, first aid facilities, stage, vendors, toilets, trash containers, and generators.

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.

Emergency Response Plan will be initiated at the discretion of the Air Boss/Balloonmeister and Chief Safety OFFICIAL/Emergency Service Director.

Each morning, all Emergency Service personnel will attend a morning briefing covering operational issues.

### **DECLARED EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:**

If the pilot experiences an emergency or must make an emergency landing in an unauthorized location, they must report the emergency to the GRBR Staff through the emergency phone number immediately. The FAA will investigate the emergency. The pilot will be required to meet with the FAA directly after the emergency. They must provide them with a written statement of the emergency. This will become a part of their permanent record and will be considered an occurrence unless deemed necessary to upgrade to an incident or accident. Once a pilot declares an emergency, the flight must be terminated.

### **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.

### **AREA OF OPERATIONS**

#### **DRONE OPERATIONS**

The Drone operator will supply GRBR with an operations manual specific to the event. The manual will contain communication procedures, operating limitations and restrictions, preflight preparations, Flight phase, and post flight operations. The operations manual will also provide a map of the intended operating areas and landing zones.

The Drones will have specific areas that they are flown in. The Drone flight area will be marked on the map. If the balloons come within 100 feet of the drone area, all drones will land immediately. Drone flying will not begin again until there are no balloons within 100 feet of the specified drone flight area.

The Drone operator will be in communications with GRBR operations, (specifically the Air Boss/Balloonmeister or the Chief Safety Official) during any drone flight activities.

Drones will operate during Glow Show, Dawn Patrol, and Mass Ascension.

#### **RC BALLOON OPERATIONS**

RC Balloons will be operated in specific launch locations. These balloons will be on a limited tether line. While full-size balloons are launching (typically 7 am to 8:30 am) no RC balloon shall fly at an altitude greater than 25 feet above ground. RC balloons may fly at 50 feet above the ground after full-size balloons have launched and are no longer in the immediate area. RC balloons may be allowed to fly at higher altitudes when large balloons are not conducting flight operations.

## **FLIGHT OPERATIONS**

The operations will occur within a 5-mile radius of the launch field located at Rancho San Rafael Park in Reno; Nevada as indicated on the official map. Final takeoffs and landings may occur beyond these boundaries. Headquarters for the event will be located at the park.

### **TYPE OF OPERATIONS:**

#### **Non- Competitive**

**Super Glow Show:** Events where up to 50 balloons inflate and static display. Balloons put on a coordinated light show to music early in the morning before dawn.

**Dawn Patrol:** 6 to 8 balloons inflate and launch before sunrise while putting on a coordinated light show first on the ground and then in the air in the dark skies.

**Mass Ascensions:** Each morning shortly after sunrise, 70 to 100 balloons will launch with the coordinated efforts of the Launch Directors. No balloons may launch without permission from a launch director.

**Tether balloons:** Balloons with three-point tie offs will tether on the launch field after the Mass Ascension.

**Rising Stars:** These are static display balloons. They inflate and interact with the crowds, giving out trading cards.

#### **Competition**

Competitive events, as specified in the Application for Certificate of Waiver or Authorization, will be called by the Air Boss/Balloonmeister and the Chief Safety OFFICIAL after consultation with competition officials and the FAA representative (if available). The event will be appropriate considering the anticipated direction of flight, weather conditions at hand, and forecasted to develop during the anticipated flight times. The tasks will be selected from Hare & Hound (H&H), balloon blackjack tournament (BBJT), Maximum Distance Double Drop (MXDD), Minimum Distance Double Drop (MNDD), Calculated Rate Approach Task (CRAT), and Judge Declared Goal (JDG), Gordon Bennett Memorial (GBM). More than one task may be called for a single flight.

### **COMMUNICATIONS REQUIREMENTS:**

The Air Boss/Balloonmeister will establish a central control point at the main announcer's platform, from which the representative will direct the event and be immediately available for those periods for coordination with the FAA Representative. In the event of cancellation of the task, airborne participants will be notified by a predetermined means, as specified at the pilot briefing.

## AIR TRAFFIC NOTIFICATION:

The Air Boss/Balloonmeister and/or Chief Safety OFFICIAL will ensure that notification is made to the Lockheed Martin Flight Services Automated Flight Services Station (AFSS) of the date, time, place, areas, altitudes, nature of the activity, and duration of the operation and request that a Notice to Airman (Notam) be issued. Such notice shall be accomplished by providing the Lockheed Martin Flight Services Station (AFSS) with a copy of the Certificate of Waiver or Authorization, if requested, at least 48 hours before the event and no more than 72 hours before the event. Notification to the AFSS should be made at 877-487-6867 or FAX 928-772-4390.

## 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 feet AGL** and must not be descending before entering the 1,000-foot radius circle around the target. For the target(s) within Rancho San Rafael Park, announcements over the public address system will advise spectators of the possibilities of both low-flying balloons over the area and markers being dropped in the area.

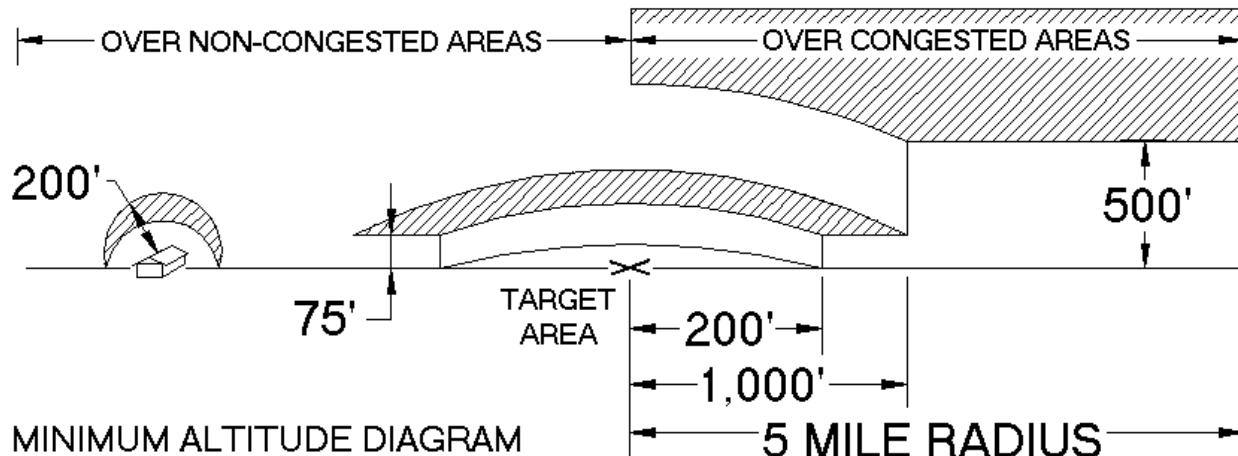


DIAGRAM 1: MINIMUM ALTITUDE FOR TARGETS OUTSIDE OF RANCHO SAN RAFAEL PARK

## 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. The launch will not be started if the surface winds are greater than 8 MPH. It is the responsibility of Safety/Weather Officials to consult with the FSS concerning the meteorological outlook. However, immediate local conditions will determine on-site operations rather than sole reliance on FSS information. The decision for flight is the

sole responsibility of the Pilot in Command and the decision of whether to halt the event is the sole responsibility of the Air Boss/Balloonmeister after consultation with appropriate safety officials.

## **GENERAL RULES**

### **Requirements to attend**

1. **Only registered pilots** may fly in the event. Only alternate pilots who have submitted their paperwork and been approved to fly in the event are allowed.
2. All aircraft must be equipped with an **operational aircraft radio**.
3. Pilots are required to **carry a minimum of one and one-half hours of fuel on board** for each flight. Low fuel will not be accepted as grounds for a declaration of an emergency and landing in any of the sensitive or prohibited zones.
4. **No Smoking is permitted on the launch field or refueling area.**

### **Pilot Briefings**

5. All registered **pilots must attend the morning preflight briefings**.
6. Rules are subject to change or alteration by the Officials due to changes in flight conditions, weather conditions, and other considerations. **Any changes will be announced at the pilot briefing.**

### **Launch Procedures**

7. **A Launch Director must launch all on-field balloons.** The Launch Director will collect the flight crewmember waiver card(s) and validate the pilot's launch just before lift-off. Pilots launching without validation will not be covered by the waiver and will be penalized.
8. Unless otherwise directed by officials, **balloons may launch only from their assigned launch site.**
9. Launch Directors will launch **only those balloons that are at equilibrium** and ready for immediate take-off. Therefore, after the pilot's launch is validated by a launch direction, the pilot will have a reasonable amount of time to launch. If they do not get off the ground within the allowed time, their launch will be invalidated, and they will be asked to deflate.

### **Flying**

10. Due to congestion in the field, and in the interest of safety, **all balloons must be tied off during inflation. No moving balloons** across the field. Balloons must be tied off unless ready to launch or put down.
11. **All balloons must not exceed 300 feet per minute ascent or descent** rate in any area of flight congestion.
12. Any balloon boxing back to the field must maintain a height of no less than 200 ft AGL while balloons are still in launch mode on the field. A penalty will be assessed for balloons flying below 200 ft over the launch field before all balloons are launched. **No landing back on the field until all balloons are launched** (Air Boss/Balloonmeister will announce over the radio if the field is open to land)
13. **Lower and downwind balloons have the right of way.**
14. All balloons are to be **down by 10:30 a.m.** local time daily.
15. If the event is canceled after the launch has begun, a recall notice will be issued on the aircraft radio (123.75) and the public-address system.
16. **Reckless flying will result in penalties or possible removal** from the event.

### **Landings**

- 17. No moving balloons** across the field. Balloons must be tied off unless ready to launch or put down. (See rule #10)
- 18. No landing or ground contact within 200 ft. of the target.** Ground contact includes anything on or attached to the ground.
- 19. Intermediate landings** to exchange passengers and/or change out fuel tanks are allowed. However, pilots who move their balloon during an intermediate landing, or sit on the ground to improve their position or otherwise gain a competitive advantage will receive no score.
- 20. There will be no venting of raw propane** on the launch field at any time.

#### Refueling

- 21. All participating pilots will be provided one refueling per day.** Dawn patrol pilots will be allowed additional refueling. Glow show pilots must bring adequate fuel to Glow and successfully complete their flight.
- 22. Pilots or crew with a BFA refueling card only** in the propane refueling station. No one is allowed to assist in propane refueling without the proper training.
- 23. No Smoking is permitted on the launch field or refueling area.**

#### Competition

- 24. Only official markers may be dropped, none from higher than 500 feet AGL.** Streamers must be completely unfurled. Any marker found to be altered, knotted, or in any conditions other than when it was presented to the pilot at the initial briefing may be declared damaged or unusable. If, in the opinion of the Chief Scoring OFFICIAL, the marker was changed to give an unfair advantage, it will not be scored.
- 25. Do not touch or move markers.** Only race officials may do so.

#### Passengers

- 26. No paid flights** will be allowed, other than those organized through GRBR .

#### **RELEASE OF LIABILITY**

- 1. The pilot, by entering the event, agrees that the Organizer and sponsors of the Event, competition officials, officers, agents and/or members of these entities are providing PICs and their crews with the facilities and means for participation in this event and no way to supersede the responsibility of the pilot in command otherwise.**
- 2. The Participant releases the Organizer and sponsors of this event, competition officials, officers, agents and/or members of these entities from liability for their actions or inactions in relation to the event which may arise out of or result from or in a manner connected with the balloon flight or activity in which the participant participates as a pilot in command.**
- 3. Liability to Third Parties:** By entering the Event, a participant assumes all liability for injury, loss, or damage to third parties or their property caused by themselves or their crew.
- 4. Safety:** All meteorological reports, forecasts, and other safety information are provided in good faith for the guidance of participants. GRBR assumes no responsibility for the completeness or accuracy of such information. It is the PIC's decision whether to rely on that information or acquire additional information.

5. Safety Officials: Officials will be appointed to monitor the inflation and operation of balloons at the event location. However, nothing shall diminish the responsibility of each PIC under these rules and regulations.
6. Recall: Flight cancellation and other critical safety information will be communicated through aircraft radio from GRBR Air Boss/Balloonmeister and GRBR safety Officials or texts through the Remind texting system.
7. Responsibility: Each PIC has full and complete authority over the balloon and is responsible for all decisions to be made associated with the balloon on the ground and in the air. Each PIC shall ensure that their crew, their equipment, and their own level of skill and experience are suitable for the conditions in their own judgement. The PIC is responsible for all actions of their crew during the Event.
8. Conduct: PICs and their crews are required to conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner and to comply with the directions of the Event Officials. Profanity or unsportsmanlike conduct directed at any Official, Event volunteer, other pilots, or guests will be ground for expulsion of the PIC from this event and/or future events.

**TASK:**

The task may be physical targets or virtual targets, may also be a combination of both.

**Hare and Hound (H&H)**

This task may be run with a single hare or two hares.

For a Single Hare task:

The first hare balloon will launch approximately 5 minutes before the hounds.

For a two-hare task:

The first hare balloon will launch approximately 5 minutes before the hounds.

The second hare balloon will launch approximately midway through the hound launch period in both tasks.

The targets will be displayed as soon after landing as possible. The target(s) will be carried by the hare balloon and displayed in a streamer fashion over the side of the basket. If the task is canceled while the hare is still flying, the target will be pulled in and no longer displayed from the hare balloon. If the task is canceled after the target has been displayed, two adjacent legs of the target will be folded in and not displayed indicating that the task is canceled. If the landing point is near power lines or any other obstacle which would present a safety hazard, the Scorers have the right to move the target(s) to any point determined to be a safer one.

Adequate policing of the target area will be provided to keep spectators and crews out.

After the initial landing, the hare balloon may be moved, deflated, or choose to fly on.

Throwing a marker before deployment of the X will result in no score and will not be grounds for protest.

Variation from the intended launch time and flight duration of the hare shall not be grounds for protest.

All other general rules apply.

### Judge Declared Goals (JDG)

Each pilot will fly from the launch area and attempt to achieve a mark or valid track point close to a goal or target set out by the officials.

The result is the distance from the observed marker to the center of the goal or target. The shortest distance is best.

All other general rules apply.

### Hesitation Waltz (HWZ)

Each pilot will fly from the launch area and attempt to achieve a mark or valid track point close to one of several set goals.

The result is the distance from the mark or closest valid track point to the nearest target if displayed, or goal. The smallest result is best.

All other general rules apply.

### Maximum Distance Double Drop (MXDD)

Pilots will attempt to achieve their marks as far apart as possible in different designated scoring areas.

One or both marks dropped outside the scoring area(s) will result in a no score.

All other general rules apply.

### Minimum Distance Double Drop (MNDD)

Pilots will attempt to achieve their markers as close together as possible in different designated scoring areas.

One or both marks dropped outside the scoring area(s) will result in a no score.

All other general rules apply.

### Calculated Rate Approach Task (CRAT)

Pilots will attempt to achieve a mark or valid track point within a valid Scoring Area close to a set goal. The Scoring Area(s) will have unique times of validity.

The result is the distance from the mark or closest valid track point to the target if displayed, or goal. The smallest result is best.

A pilot who does not achieve a mark (on the ground) or track point inside the Scoring Area during its time of validity will not achieve a result.

All other general rules apply.

### Balloon Blackjack Tournament (BBJT)

Playing cards will be displayed in a target area.

Each competing pilot will be issued two (2) "blackjack" markers.

Pilots may drop one (1) marker on each of two (2) different cards.

The pilot will receive the points associated with the card upon which any part of the weighted portion of the marker comes to rest.

Highest score or 21 wins.

Only "blackjack" markers will be scored.

A pilot may NOT drop two (2) markers on the same card.

If more than one pilot achieves the highest score, the winner will be determined by a "tie-breaker" to be described at the pilot briefing.

All general race rules apply.

## GORDON BENNETT MEMORIAL (GBM)

Pilots will launch from the launch area and attempt to drop their mark(s) within a Scoring Area(s) close to a target or set goal.

The result is the distance from the mark to the target, the shortest distance best.

A pilot who does not achieve a mark inside the scoring area will not achieve a result.

## PILOT DECLARED GOALS (PDG)

Pilots will attempt to achieve a mark close to a goal selected and declared by them before the flight.

The number of goals, the time, place, and any other specifics will be set at the pilot briefing.

The result is the distance from the mark to the nearest valid declared goal. The smallest result is best.

## SCORING

Scoring for the H&H and the on-field task will be done using the “Watch Me Fly” scoring system.

Only those markers landing within the scoring area will be retrieved by the scorers. All others are the responsibility of the pilot/crew.

In case of a tie, when multiple tasks are being cumulated, the pilot with the closest accumulated distances will be declared the winner. If an MXDD task is called it will be the farthest distance for the results of this task. If there is still a tie, the pilot with the shortest single distance will be declared the winner. Further criteria, if needed, will be selected by the Chief Scoring OFFICIAL.

Daily and cumulative scores will be posted on the “Watch Me Fly” website and at the officials’ trailer next to the pilot briefing area or in a location announced at the pilot briefing. Provisional results will be posted for one hour before being declared official results for the day. Competition pilots have that hour to review their results and ask for clarification and/or file a protest. ***After the scores are posted for one hour, they will be considered official and will not be changed.***

## PENALTIES

Penalties will be assessed for violations up to and including disqualification for one task or the entire event at the Chief Scoring OFFICIAL’s discretion. Penalties can be assessed for, but are not limited to the following infractions:

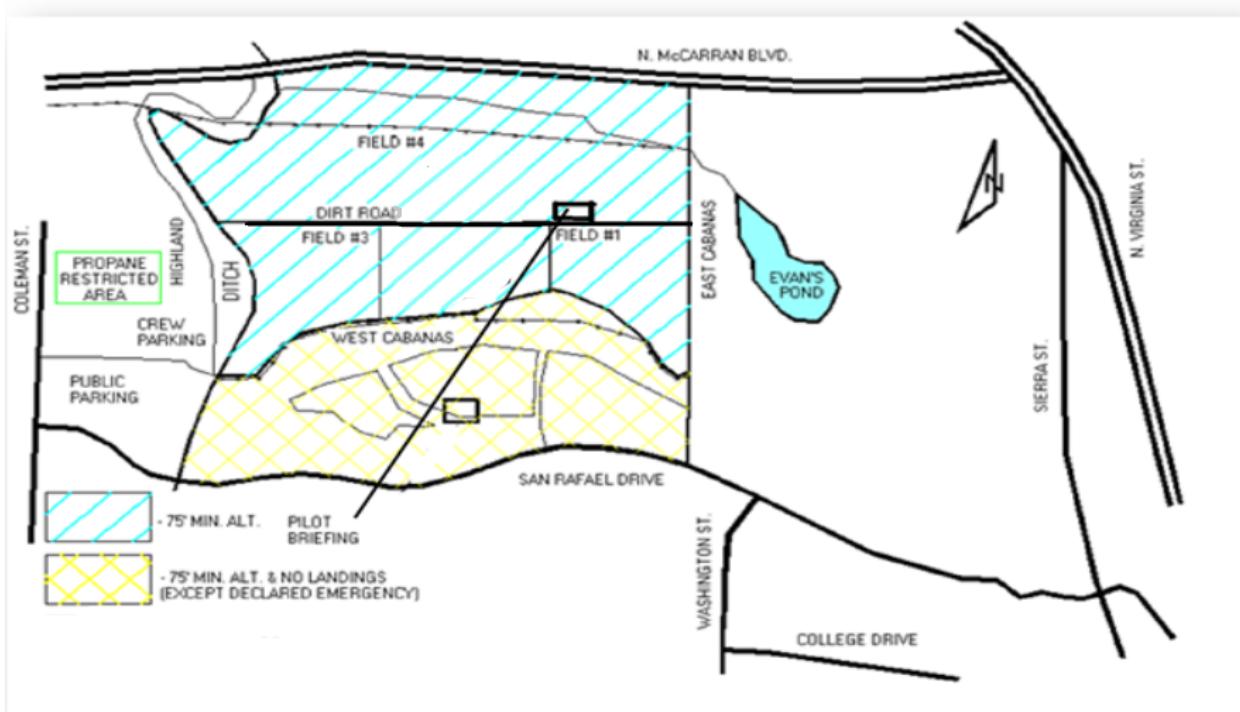
1. Unregistered pilot flying the balloon
2. Violation of race rules
3. Violation of 14 CFR regulations
4. Violation of the event waiver, Operations Manual, or Supplemental Conditions
5. Obstructing any target
6. Piloting a balloon that is in un-airworthy condition
7. Flying in a careless or reckless or unsafe manner.
8. Launching from an area not so designated
9. Carrying unauthorized passengers
10. Un-sportsmanlike conduct
11. Launching without direction from a GRBR launch director.

Note: Any violation of the race waiver or FAR will be submitted to the FAA.

## **PROTESTS**

The Protest Jury will consist of the Competition OFFICIAL, participating pilot(s), and Chief Scoring OFFICIAL. All protests will be made in writing to the Safety OFFICIAL or the Chief Scoring OFFICIAL within the provisional score period (see definition in Scoring section above). The protest must be accompanied by a \$100 cash protest fee at the time of submittal. The fee will be refunded if the Protest Jury upholds the protest; otherwise, the \$100 fee is forfeited.

Diagram 2: MINIMUM ALTITUDES OVER RANCHO SAN RAFAEL PARK



## **LOCAL AIRPORT INFORMATION**

### **Reno/Tahoe International (RNO)**

RENO, NV  
Publicly Owned, Public Use  
3.0 mi. SE of the city.  
N39-29.95 W119-46.09  
Mag Var: 16 deg E  
Phone: 775-328-6400  
Fax: 775-328-6510  
[www.renoairport.com](http://www.renoairport.com)  
[mmora@renoairport.com](mailto:mmora@renoairport.com)

#### **Communication Freqs:**

Unicom - 122.95  
TWR - 118.7  
GND - 121.9  
DEP - 126.3  
CLNC DEL - 124.9  
FSS- RENO 122.5 122.2

**Approach Freqs:** Reno:119.2; Reno:126.3.  
**WX Contact:** ATIS 135.8 775-348-1550; ASOS 775-324-6659.  
**FSS:** RENO 800-992-7433  
**Elevation:** 4415 MSL  
**Hours:** 24  
**Tower Hours:** 24 hrs.  
**Fees:** None  
**Charts:** SAN FRANCISCO.  
**Traffic Pattern:** Light Aircraft: 5212 MSL; Heavy Aircraft: 5412 MSL.

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### Reno/Stead (RTS\4SD)

RENO, NV  
Publicly Owned, Public Use  
10.0 mi. NW of the city.  
N39-40.04 W119-52.57  
Mag Var: 16 deg E  
Phone: 775-328-6570  
Fax: 775-677-1393  
[www.renoairport.com](http://www.renoairport.com)  
[spolak@renoairport.com](mailto:spolak@renoairport.com)

#### Communication Freqs:

Unicom - 122.7  
CTAF - 122.7  
FSS- RENO 122.5

**Approach Freqs:** Reno:126.3.  
**WX Contact:** AWOS 135.175 775-677-0589.  
**FSS:** RENO 800-992-7433  
**Elevation:** 5050 MSL  
**Hours:** daylight; night on req  
**Fees:** None  
**Charts:** SAN FRANCISCO.  
**Traffic Pattern:** Light Aircraft: 5800 MSL; Heavy Aircraft: 6200 MSL; Multiengine Aircraft: 6000 MSL.

### Spanish Springs (N86)

RENO, NV  
Publicly Owned, Public Use  
7.0 mi. N of the city.  
N39-39.99 W119-43.39  
Mag Var: 16 deg E  
Phone: 775-772-8049  
Fax: 775-425-4268  
[www.spanishspringsairport.org](http://www.spanishspringsairport.org)  
[n86aviation@msn.com](mailto:n86aviation@msn.com)

#### Communication Freqs:

CTAF - 122.9  
FSS- RENO 122.5 122.2

**Approach Freqs:**  
**FSS:** RENO 800-992-7433  
**Elevation:** 4600 MSL  
**Hours:** 9 am to 6 pm  
**Fees:** None

Date: 2/1/26

Original

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# # # Operations Manual # # #

The Great Reno Balloon Race

Charts: SAN FRANCISCO.

Traffic Pattern: Multiengine Aircraft: 5600 MSL; Light Aircraft: 5400

PILOT WAIVER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

All pilots who register to participate in the 2026 GRBR will be required to submit an electronically signed statement that follows as part of the online registration process.



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

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PRINT NAME

---

SIGNATURE

---

DATE

PILOTS, without a completed form on file before the event, will not be able to participate in the event.