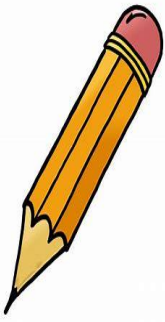


# The Quick Release

Published Monthly

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August 2021



## How to Survive a Ramp Check

By Pat Cannon

You are just beginning to lay out your envelope on a bright, sunny morning. You have your crew briefed, and you are going to fly a young couple, one of whom does not know they are going to be proposed to. Big surprises will be in store for his young couple and anticipation is high for a great flight. A bigger surprise is awaiting you as well. As your crew begins to spread the envelope out for you, a car pulls up behind the balloon vehicle, and a person gets out and approaches the balloon. He/she asks where the pilot is, and one of your crew points at you. This new arrival on the scene approaches you, extends his hand and you take it saying hello. The next words spoken usually evoke terror in any pilot....."Hi, my name is Sam Smith and I'm from the FAA. I'm here to conduct a ramp check". Well, there went the day and your high spirits.

But wait. Why would you feel that way? Maybe it's because you have never been subjected to one of these surprise FAA activities before and maybe you are thinking.....Oh no, what am I going to have to do now?

First, let's qualify what a ramp check is and who may perform one. The FAA has the authority to check any airman or aircraft they wish to check. There does not have to be a reason and truly, most ramp checks are random. There are the so-called ramp checks that each of us go through when we attend a festival, and the reality is that a ramp check in the field is not much different, with a couple of minor exceptions. When you attend a festival, you are asked for the aircraft airworthiness certificate, the current registration certificate and in addition, you are asked for the annual and/or 100 hour sign off as appropriate. You will also be asked to produce your pilot certificate and your Flight Review endorsement. No problem, right? Do you know that at the festival, these documents are checked not only for the FAA, but for the festival organizers, who are also interested in the aircraft airworthiness and your currency. What you are so readily able to produce for them is actually more than you will produce on an "in the field" ramp check. There are rules that must be followed by the FAA and let's discuss the particulars.

# How to Survive a Ramp Check (continued)

By Pat Cannon

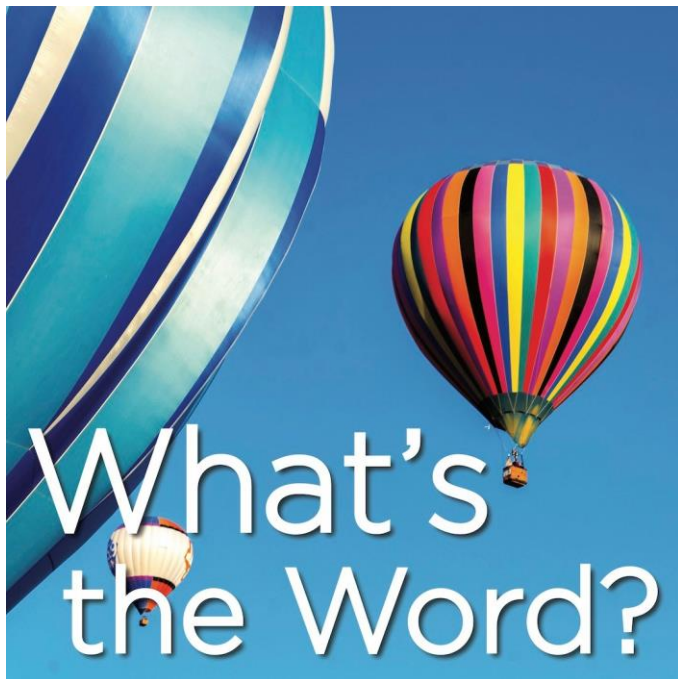
OK, back to our surprise visit. The FAA representative is not there to hassle you, or to try to "catch" you doing something outside the rules. They are there to check certain documents, and this is driven by policy. Your first reaction to this visit should be to stay calm and smile. Most importantly, greet your FAA rep with respect and courtesy. He or she is only doing what they have been assigned to do. Identify yourself as the pilot. What should happen next is that you exchange your documents. For you, that involves your pilot certificate and for the inspector, it will be their authorization to act on behalf of the FAA. That will likely be a badge or wallet document called a 110A. If they do not produce it in the beginning, you may, and should ask them for their ID. They don't know who you are, and you don't know who they are, so this is a common courtesy that both understand is necessary to establish identity. You are not going to offend the FAA by asking and in fact they will probably show you their document as they approach you.

Once this is done, part of your work is already finished. You have shown them your pilot certificate and if asked, your driver's license. So, what else are you going to have to produce? The inspector will likely want to see your pilot certificate, aircraft airworthiness certificate, and certificate of registration, at a minimum. The inspector may ask for your Aircraft Flight Manual if the balloon was issued one its manufacturer date, signed by the FAA as the official flight manual for that aircraft serial number. Very early balloon had only a balloon operators manual. Regardless there are two items that are required to be carried on board. These are the weight and balance information and the balloon limitations. The weight and balance information needs to be current with envelope, basket, burner, and tanks all listed in the computation. Serial numbers are important.

Why do I mention weight and balance? Most of you are aware of the NTSB's most recent recommendation that the FAA conduct more surveillance on balloons. This is not a new request from NTSB. The FAA has not formally adopted any plan at this moment to increase the frequency of field surveillance of balloon operations, but in at least one area of the country, almost daily ramp checks are being conducted and a weakness is being seen in this area. So be prepared to show your weight and balance calculation for the flight you are about to take or be prepared to show that you know how. It is within the power of the FAA to ask that question on a ramp check. The items above are what will likely be asked for. Be courteous and respectful and produce what is asked for, but what if they ask you for a copy of your flight review, or want to see your annual inspection signoff? The answer to that question lies in what is required to be on board. The aircraft is not required to carry its maintenance documents on board, nor are you required to have your Flight Review endorsement in your pocket or your logbook on board. If you are asked for those items, your answer should be to tell them that your Flight Review or annual/100 hours was done on (give a date if you know) and that if the inspector is interested in knowing specifics, then you will send copies to him after the flight.

Two last points are these. Be familiar with what allowable damage is on your balloon. If the inspector sees something on the balloon that indicates damage, they have the authority to ask. The answer as to allowable damage is in your flight manual, so if asked about visible damage, the better policy is to look it up, show the inspector what the flight manual says and that should end the discussion if the damage is in limits. In addition, what if the inspector walks up to you just as you are about to hit the burner to inflate? In this case, very politely ask that the inspector follow you to your landing area if he/she wants and you will be happy to comply with the ramp check request. The inspector may not interfere with the conduct of the flight. Most know that, but many are not familiar with balloon operations, so you may be asked at an inappropriate time. If that happens, be nice, but ask the inspector to do this another time.

In review, if you are asked to participate in a ramp check, don't panic, be courteous and respectful of the inspector's request. Comply with the required items as they are asked for and the process will be painless. If done right, you may never see another ramp check, and you have just done something to improve the image of ballooning in the eyes of the inspector and their office. Don't be snippy, defensive, or abusive in any way. Even if you are in the right and everything is in order, this will earn you not only a black mark with the local FAA office, but it hurts the efforts of every other balloonist that will be ramp checked in the future.



**WHAT'S THE WORD CONTEST  
TELL US AND WIN \$500!**

Leaving the ground outside the basket never ends well. To that end, we're seeking a universal catchphrase to keep crew grounded! Every balloonist nationwide has a chance to create a crew safety legacy for all of us. Visit us at [fb.me/whatsthewordcontest](https://fb.me/whatsthewordcontest) for more information on how to enter or click here to go directly to the entry form: <https://forms.gle/8dFn8KZzEM9pGoEr5>

**WELCOME  
NEW BFA MEMBERS**



Sarah Keller  
Kyle McCullough  
Jason Hamrick  
Garrett Williams  
John Lichtenstein  
Catherine Jakobs  
Natalie Lovato  
Justin Depoy  
Linda Siegmann  
Laura Heinrich  
Kristopher Stephenson  
Sandra Wisner

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Saint Mary's, IA  
Billings, MT  
Sioux Falls, SD  
Decatur, GA  
Alexandria, LA  
Albuquerque, NM  
Corrales, NM  
Tulsa, OK  
Reno, NV  
Elko, NV  
Kent, WA

Vanessa McClary  
Perry Ochsner  
Jason Rosenkranz  
Emily Bracewell  
Patrick Dailey  
James Dunn  
Daniel Hyde  
Mark Coffing  
Marci Martin  
Anna Immenschuh  
Valerie White

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Dilworth, MN  
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Spartanburg, SC  
Albuquerque, NM  
Albuquerque, NM  
Heartland, TX  
Elko, NV  
Kaysville, UT



**NEW PILOTS** receive a **FREE** BFA Electronic 1-year Membership! Contact Jill at [bfaoffice@bfa.net](mailto:bfaoffice@bfa.net) or (515) 961-8809



**Crew Achievement Award Program**

Lynden Bridges	Colorado	Level 1
Brian Chase	Pennsylvania	Level 1
Monica Jonard	Illinois	Level 2

**Pilot Achievement Award Program**

Kelly Sasser Level 3 Intermediate Aeronaut

# 5<sup>th</sup> FAI Junior World Hot Air Balloon Championship

Leszno, Poland



Our American competitors at Junior World's, Christopher Cliver and Patrick Nilz finished in 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> respectfully. We are proud of the great job they did in Poland.

Congratulations to the Top 3

1. Roy Gommer NED
2. Denis Dawidziuk POL
3. Dmitriy Zhokhov RUS



## 2021 U.S. BFA National Hot Air Balloon Championship

Mitchell, NE

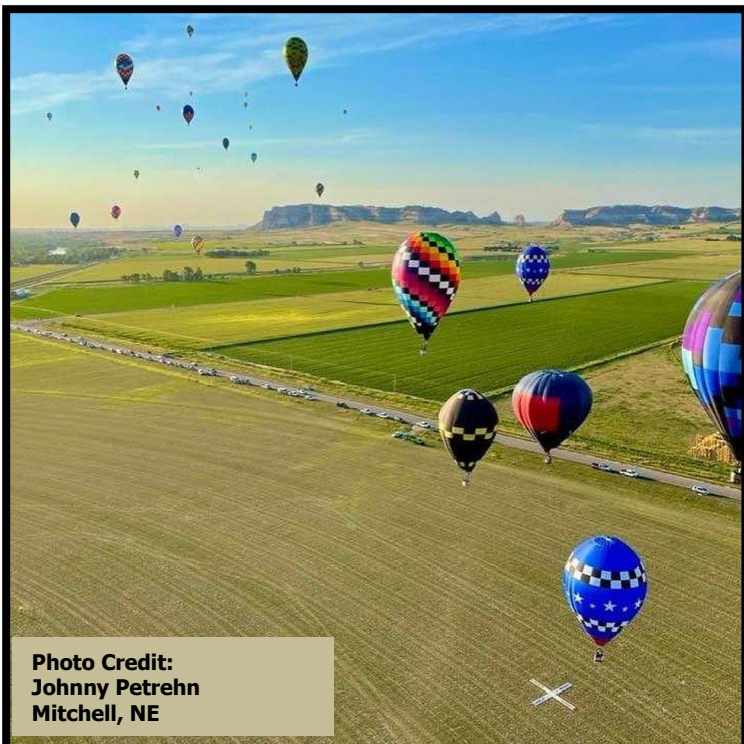


Photo Credit:  
Johnny Petrehn  
Mitchell, NE



Congratulations to all the  
competitors.

Top three winners:

1. Chase Donner
2. Jeremy Rubin
3. Rhett Heartsill

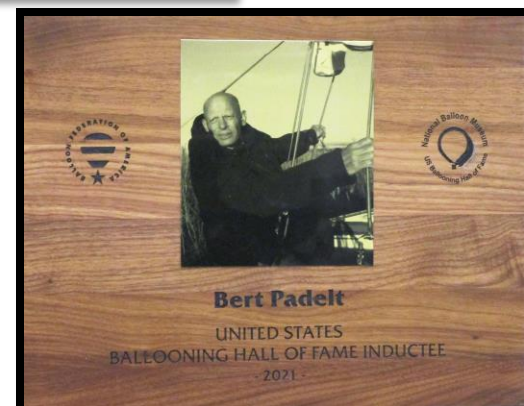
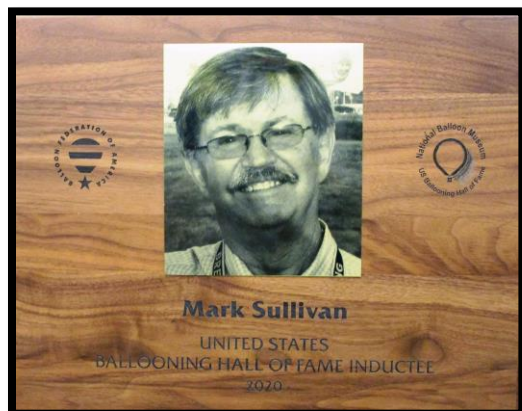
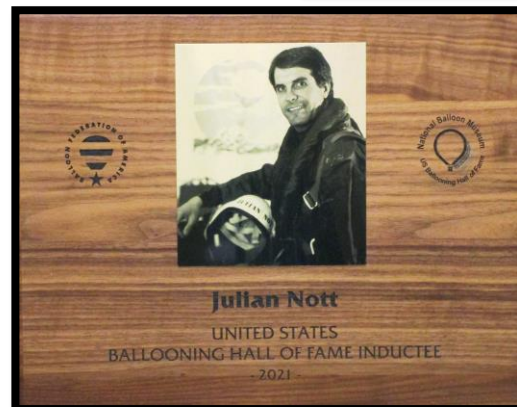
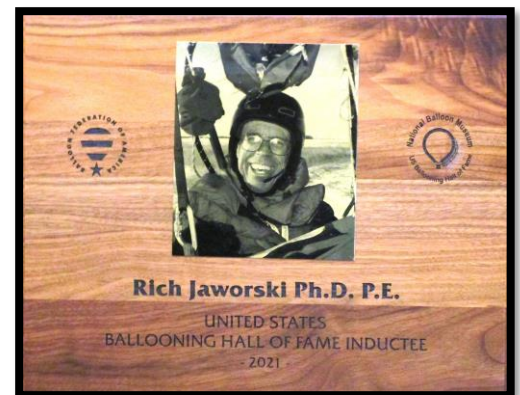
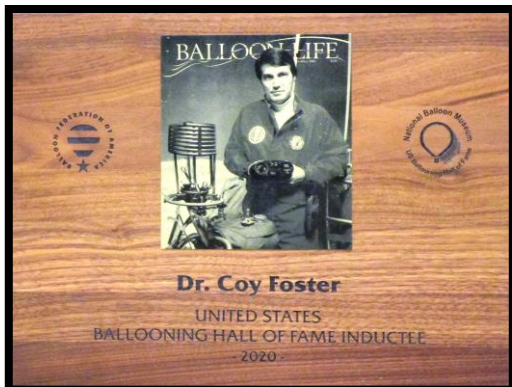
# US Ballooning Hall of Fame Award

## Congratulations to the 2020 & 2021 inductees into the US Ballooning Hall of Fame

*Dr. Coy Foster*  
*Mark Sullivan*  
*Rich Jaworski Ph.D. P.E.*  
*Julian Nott*  
*Bert Padelt*

The US Ballooning Hall of Fame Award is a partnership effort between the Balloon Federation of America and the National Balloon Museum. The award is designed to recognize individuals who have made exemplary contributions to the history, development, or growth of ballooning in the United States. The selection of an inductee to the United States Ballooning Hall of Fame is a merit-based selection. US Ballooning Hall of Fame Award recipients are Notable Balloonists as identified by the BFA Hall of Fame Committee. Click the following link to access the biographies and other information on US Hall of Fame Award recipients and other Notable Balloonists or to find the nomination application.

<https://bfa.net/u-s-ballooning-hall-of-fame>



# September Events

9/2-9/6	2021 US Women's Nationals	Brookfield, MO
9/3-9/6	Hot Air Affair Rising Above Cancer	Williamston, SC
9/4-9/6	Labor Day Lift Off	Colorado Springs, CO
9/10-9/12	Paris Balloon and Music Festival	Paris, TX
9/17-9/19	Balloons Over Bay Harbor	Bay Harbor, MI
9/17-9/21	Annual Arkansas Hot Air Balloon State Championship	Harrison, AR
9/24-9/26	Reaching New Heights	Clarksville, AR
9/24-9/26	Winnemucca Balloon Festival	Winnemucca, NV



Photo: Casey Donnelly Taken in: Masai Mara Kenya

## A FAR Question

**Who is responsible for the airworthiness of a civil aircraft?**

**Hint: 91.70**

*(Look for answer in September 2021 issue)*

**Last Month's Question & Answer: 91.209 and 61.57(b)**

**Question:** When do you need to turn on your Position and anticollision lights?

**Answer:** 91.209 (a) during the period from sunset to sunrise (see additional answer if in Alaska)

**Answer: 61.57(b)** Night takeoff and landing experience. (1) Except as provided in paragraph (e) of this section, no person may act as pilot in command of an aircraft carrying passengers during the period beginning 1 hour after sunset and ending 1 hour before sunrise, unless within the preceding 90 days that person has made at least three take-offs and landings to a full stop during the period beginning 1 hour after sunset and ending 1 hour before sunrise...



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