

Two Man Die In Balloon Crash

Friday, November 16, 2007

DENVER, Two men were killed Friday morning when an experimental helium balloon that they were in hit a high power line and dived 65 feet, plunging into a field in northern Iowa.

Dr. Thomas Boylan, 62, of Fort Collins, and Bradley Brookhart, 37, of Littleton, died at the scene, according to authorities in Iowa. The third man in the balloon, Doug Chaplin, of Albuquerque, N.M., survived but was airlifted to Mercy Medical Center in Mason City, Iowa, with serious injuries. He was listed in fair condition. Boylan was piloting the craft that had launched from Greeley, Colo. Wednesday night. His balloon was with a second balloon that was attempting to set a world endurance and distance record. No injuries were reported in that craft, which landed safely in southern Wisconsin Friday, at about 5 p.m. Central Time. The two balloons took off about 90 minutes apart from a field in Greeley and authorities received a number of calls from the public reporting UFOs as the white balloons lifted into the sky Wednesday night.

Police were able to talk to Chaplin who told them the crew was attempting to land when they hit the power line, but he wasn't able to explain why the crew was landing. Franklin County Sheriff Larry Richtsmeier said the residents in the area were waving to the men in the balloon when they saw it hit a power line, severing the attachment between the balloon and the wicker basket. The basket crashed into a farm field about three miles southwest of Coulter, Iowa. Their gear and supplies for their cross-country trip spilled all over and the basket was on its side when help arrived. The deflated, unattached balloon, also known as an envelope, landed a mile away in a corn field. "They said that it pulled up, and then the balloon just took off and continued on and the basket dropped, and there's about a 65-foot drop. And there was a lot of trauma impact to the one corner of the basket," Richtsmeier told the Mason City Globe Gazette. The group was on their way to the eastern United States and had stopped Thursday night in Omaha, Neb. They planned to be in eastern Iowa by nightfall Friday, according to the Rocky Mountain News.

The second balloon, piloted by Troy Bradley of Albuquerque, N.M., was also traveling over Iowa at the time. Bradley was trying to set a world record flight for distance and duration for the AM-3 balloon. The balloon mixes hot air and helium. The Greeley Tribune, reported that Bradley "easily broke the world duration record, which was 27.5 hours and by Friday morning had been in the air more than 30 hours." Tim Cole, of Greeley, helped the pilots with their launches but told he could not comment about who was on board. He was at Boylan's house on Friday, consoling his friend's widow, according to the News.

Federal Aviation Administration investigators arrived at the scene to take over the investigation on Friday afternoon. [World Aviation Portal](#) [Aviation Ads](#) [Aviation Business Directory](#) [Aviation Links Index](#)