ENVELOPE OF SAFETY PROGRAM SUMMARY

Released 10/13/17

Background of Envelope of Safety Program:

As a result of the tragedy in Texas, the Balloon Federation of America (BFA) established a "Call to Action" committee that has been working with the FAA since July 2016 following the accident in Lockhart. The Committee was tasked with creating goal oriented programs to improve safety within the ballooning community and in particular, the commercial balloon ride business.

Selling hot air balloon rides in the United States is a multi-million dollar industry. In this industry consumers may or may not notice the difference between the pilots/companies that fly large balloons 200+ days a year and a hobbyist taking paying passengers at a balloon festival over the weekend. The one constant across all operators is the expectations of the consumer. At a minimum, the consumer expects proper attention to safety and regulations.

In a perfect world, every consumer riding with a commercially rated hot air balloon pilot in the United States would have an equal chance of receiving a safe and enjoyable experience. However, recent events have shown that is not the case.

The Program

One of the primary tasks of the Call to Action Committee was to develop a way to educate consumers about the hot air balloon ride industry. Over the past ten months, the Professional Ride Operator (PRO) division of the BFA and the Call to Action Committee has worked to develop a program to present to the FAA that addresses the issues of consumer education and ballooning safety.

The **Envelope of Safety Program** was built around input collected from operators around the country of all sizes, both PRO members and nonmembers. The **Envelope of Safety Program** has two primary goals:

1. Make safety and professionalism a competitive advantage in the marketplace for operators of ALL sizes.
2. Inform consumers

This program is designed to raise the bar for the entire balloon ride industry as a whole. The first step taken by the PRO board when developing this program was to seek feedback industry wide, not just from PRO members. Based upon the feedback we received, the vast majority of industry participants are in favor of having a program designed to raise the bar among operators.

The feedback PRO received was instrumental in developing the **Envelope of Safety Program**. Every operator wants to know “what’s in it for me? Why should I participate?” Small operators are worried about the cost and whether the program will favor large operators while large operators are worried about sharing operational data/practices with competitors. The PRO board went to great lengths to digest all of the feedback and develop a well thought out solution that is both practical and fair to operators of all sizes.

While this **Envelope of Safety Program** is a fully functioning safety program, the BFA will continually monitor the operations of the program and may institute changes as needed in the future.

The **Envelope of Safety Program** is presented for your review below.

PROGRAM CRITERIA

The program is divided into two parts: pilot requirements, and ride company requirements. Pilot requirements apply to all pilots taking paying passengers. There are three levels of company requirements: Silver, Gold, and Platinum. While any size company can achieve the highest level, the tiered structure was designed with different size companies in mind.

RIDE COMPANY REQUIREMENTS

Silver Medal

Any company that meets the following criteria and is a member of the Professional Ride Operators Division has achieved the status of Silver Medal Holder.

- ✓ Company applicant must provide proof of valid aircraft insurance for each aircraft it owns that takes paying passengers.
- ✓ Company applicant must provide proof that all aircraft used to accommodate paying passengers has passed an annual inspection – *verified by scanned copy of logbook.*
- ✓ Company applicant must not have had more than 2 accidents, incidents, or occurrences attributed to an aircraft or pilot in the last 3 years
- ✓ Company applicant must have been established as a company for a minimum of 18 months – *verified by date of organization*.
- ✓ Company applicant owner/operator must be a member of the Balloon Federation of America
- ✓ Company applicant must have a presence within a forum that allows for customers to rate and review the company such as TripAdvisor, Yelp, Facebook, Google, etc.
- ✓ Company applicant must have two verifiable industry references.
- ✓ Company applicants must maintain a website that;
    - Accurately discloses all policies of the company such as: cancellation policies, pricing, weight limits, surcharges, gift certificate refund policies, etc.;
    - Does not contain inaccurate or misleading information; and
    - Does not maliciously injure the professional reputation, prospects or business of others
- ✓ Company applicant must provide proof of valid commercial vehicle insurance for any vehicle it uses to transport paying passengers.
- ✓ All pilots who operate aircraft owned by Company applicant for the purpose of taking paying passengers must satisfy the PRO pilot criteria.

Gold Medal

To achieve the status of Gold Medal, applicants must have achieved Silver Medal status and satisfy the additional criteria below.

- ✓ Company applicants have notified the Flight Standards District Office governing the area where balloon ride operations are based (contact info, flying area, general scope of operations).
- ✓ Company applicant has written policy which establishes procedure for collecting and storing weather information for each flight
- ✓ Company applicant has written policy which establishes procedure for executing and storing passenger liability waivers for all passengers
- ✓ Company applicant has policy that each balloon will be staffed with pilot or crew personnel that have received CPR and/or emergency first aid training
- ✓ Company applicant must not have had more than one accidents, incidents, or occurrences attributed to an aircraft or pilot in the last 3 years

Platinum Medal

To achieve the status of Platinum Medal, applicants must have achieved Gold Medal status and satisfy the additional criteria below.

- ✓ Company applicant mandates that all pilots participate in a random drug screening at least once a year – *verified by sending receipts for drug testing services each year*
- ✓ Company applicant has written policies for crew safety
- ✓ Company applicant must not have had any accidents, incidents, or occurrences attributed to an aircraft or pilot within the last 3 years

PRO PILOT CRITERIA

In order for a company to receive PRO Pilot status, all pilots who act as PIC of an aircraft owned by the company for the purpose of carrying paying passengers must satisfy the criteria below. This policy does not apply to pilots who fly commercial advertising balloons not used to carry passengers for hire.

PRO Pilot Criteria

1. Pilot applicants must have attended a BFA sanctioned safety seminar within the last 12 months – *attendance to be verified by BFA office*
2. For pilots operating aircraft 119,999 cu. ft. or smaller, pilot applicant must:
    a. be commercially licensed for 18 months – *will be verified by copy of certificate*
    b. have 150-hour as PIC in LTA aircraft – *verified by copy of logbook*
3. For pilots operating aircraft 120,000 cu. ft. and larger, pilot applicant must:
    a. be commercially licensed for 18 months – *will be verified by copy of cert.*
    b. satisfy the minimum hour requirement for the largest balloon which they fly. The hour requirement for each size balloon is determined by multiplying the volume of the balloon (in thousands) by two – for example a pilot flying a 140 must have a minimum of 280 LTA-PIC hours – *will be verified by copy of most recent full page in pilot logbook*
    c. have a current second-class medical – *will be verified by copy of medical*
4. Pilot applicants must not have more than 1 accident, incident or occurrences attributable to the pilot within the last year and not more than two accidents within the last five years – *will be verified via FAA record check.*
5. Pilot applicant must pass a drug and alcohol background check. An applicant must not have two or more unrelated drug or alcohol related convictions within the last five years. *Verified by a third-party company.*
6. Pilot applicant must be enrolled in the FAA WINGS program