



AERO CLUB OF INDIA (NAC-India)
Established: 1927
(Member: Fédération Aéronautique Internationale, Switzerland-NAC-India)

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

FOR BALLOONING (HOT AIR & GAS BALLOONS)
FAI-ALIGNED | NASG-ALIGNED | DGCA-INTERFACED

1. Purpose and Regulatory Context

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) establishes the regulatory, safety, and operational framework for conduct of Ballooning activities in India, including Hot Air Balloons and Gas Balloons. This SOP is issued by the Aero Club of India (ACI), the National Air Sports Control of India (NAC-India), in alignment with the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) Sporting Code, the National Air Sports Guidelines (NASG), and applicable provisions of Indian aviation law.

2. Statutory Authority

This SOP is issued under the authority of:

- Article 246 read with Seventh Schedule, Union List Entry 29 of the Constitution of India
- Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhinyam, 2024
- National Air Sports Guidelines (NASG)
- Designation of ACI as National Air Sports Control of India (NAC-India)
- FAI Sporting Code – Ballooning Discipline

3. Scope of Application

This SOP applies to all Ballooning activities conducted within Indian territory, including:

- Recreational balloon flights
- Training and instruction
- Commercial passenger ballooning
- National and international ballooning events and competitions
- Demonstration and promotional flights
- Participation by Indian and foreign pilots

4. Definitions and Classification

Ballooning refers to lighter-than-air aircraft operations using Hot Air or Gas-filled balloons for ascent, navigation, and landing under atmospheric conditions.

Operations are classified as:

- Recreational
- Training
- Commercial passenger flights
- Event / Competition
- Demonstration / Promotional

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Aero Club of India (ACI – NAC-India):

- Apex authority for governance, licensing, and sporting oversight
- Issuance of FAI Sporting Licences
- Event sanction and safety oversight

Operators / Ballooning Companies / Clubs:

- Compliance with this SOP and approved operating procedures
- Maintenance of balloon systems and crew training

Pilots / Crew:

- Valid licence, medical fitness, and currency

State Governments / District Administration:

- Facilitation and local coordination only

DGCA:

- Aircraft, airspace, and flight safety interface

6. Eligibility and Licensing Requirements

- Minimum age as prescribed by ACI
- Valid medical fitness declaration
- Completion of ACI-recognised balloon pilot training
- Valid FAI Sporting Licence issued through ACI
- Compliance with currency and recency requirements

7. Balloon and Equipment Standards

- Balloon envelope, burner, basket, and fuel systems compliant with FAI and manufacturer standards
- Regular inspection and maintenance schedules
- Mandatory safety equipment including fire extinguishers and first aid
- Fuel handling and storage safety compliance
- Balloon and equipment logbooks

8. Infrastructure and Launch/Landing Site Requirements

- Approved launch and landing sites with adequate clearances
- Weather assessment and wind limitations
- Obstacle-free landing areas
- Ground crew coordination and recovery arrangements
- Local administrative facilitation where required

9. Operational Procedures

- Pre-flight planning and weather briefing
- Passenger briefing and safety instructions
- Inflation, launch, flight, and landing procedures
- Post-flight inspection and documentation

10. Safety Management and Incident Reporting

- Mandatory risk assessment prior to operations
- Emergency response and contingency planning
- Immediate reporting of accidents and incidents to ACI
- Cooperation with safety investigations

11. Event and Commercial Operation Authorisation

All ballooning events, competitions, and commercial passenger operations shall require prior authorisation from ACI (NAC-India). International participation shall comply with FAI and ACI protocols.

12. Compliance and Enforcement

Non-compliance with this SOP may result in suspension or withdrawal of licences, authorisations, or event permissions. Serious violations may be escalated to competent authorities as applicable.

13. Review and Amendments

This SOP shall be reviewed periodically by ACI to ensure continued alignment with international standards, national policy, and safety requirements.