CODE OF CONDUCT FOR BALLOON RELEASES

NABAS is very aware of its responsibilities to the environment. This Code of Conduct was produced to formalise the principles for balloon releases, which have long been the standard for the Industry. It is extremely important that everyone adheres to this code in the interest of safeguarding the environment.

1. ***Only natural latex rubber balloons will be used for Releases:*** Latex, being an organic product degrades naturally in the environment. Balloons made of any material other than latex and in particular foil balloons ***should not*** be used for Releases. It is forbidden to use balloons containing any metallic pigment eg:silver, gold etc.

2. ***All components used in balloon releases must be biodegradable:*** Balloons ***must be*** hand tied; plastic valves ***should not*** be used. Any attached labels ***must be*** of paper, preferably recycled.

3. ***Only helium gas should be used to inflate the balloons:*** Helium is an inert lighter-than-air gas. As the balloon rises, the gas expands until eventually the balloon bursts producing small fragments, which aid decomposition.

4. ***No ribbons or strings must be attached to the balloons:*** Ribbons and strings represent a potential problem and ***must never*** be used in balloon releases. Labels should be attached via the hand tied balloon knot.

5. ***Balloons must always be launched singly:*** Single balloons disperse easily and quickly. They ***must never*** be tied together in bunches for balloon releases.

6. ***Full approval must be obtained from the relevant authorities:*** Releases exceeding 5000 balloons should not take place unless they have been cleared in advance with all relevant air traffic and local authorities. The Authorities must be notified ***in writing*** at least ***28 days prior*** to the release.

7. ***Maximum balloon size:*** Balloons larger than 12“ cannot be released.

8. ***All balloons sold near balloon releases must be weighted:*** Any balloons sold in the vicinity of a balloon release ***must be*** sold with a weight attached to ensure they cannot escape. Foil Balloons ***must never*** be released. Latex balloons with a plastic valve and ribbon must also be weighted.

What happens when a balloon is released? A scientific survey carried out in 1989 revealed that on release a balloon will float up to a height of approximately 5 miles and then it becomes brittle and shatters into miniscule pieces falling back to earth at a rate of circa one piece every 5 square miles. Problems can arise when a balloon is not inflated properly or fully or is carrying too much weight and therefore does not reach the height at which shattering occurs. This situation causes a potential danger to wildlife and the environment.

What can I do to reduce this risk? The Balloon Industry has produced a Code of Conduct, with input from leading environmental organisations; you should follow this advice to the letter.

Conclusion: Balloon releases are fun, spectacular and fulfill a variety of promotional and fundraising objectives. However if best practice is not followed major problems can occur.

If you require any further clarification or need advice please contact NABAS, The Balloon Industry’s only independent association on 01989 762 204.

Applying for permission from the Civil Aviation Authority. It is a requirement that if more than 5,000 balloons are being released you must apply in writing for permission to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) at least 28 days in advance of the release. The CAA must also be informed of any balloon releases up to 5,000 balloons if the release is in the vicinity of an airport or airfield. A form can be obtained by calling either the NABAS office on 01989 762 204 or the Airspace Utilisation Section of the CAA on 020 7453 6599.

NABAS

The Balloon Association

Guidelines and Code of Conduct

- **Balloons**
- **Balloon Releases**
- **Helium Balloon Gas**

The Guidelines and Code of Conduct is designed for anyone who is planning a Balloon Release. We believe this should be strictly adhered to in the interest of safeguarding the environment

Katepwa House, Ashfield Park Avenue,
Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 5AX
Tel: 01989 762 204 Fax: 01989 567 676
email: admin@nabas.co.uk website: www.nabas.co.uk

BALLOONS & the Environment

There are three types of balloon:

Latex - are made from the sap of rubber trees and 100% biodegradable.
Foils – are a metal film coated plastic and not biodegradable.
Bubbles – are made from stretchy plastic sheet and not biodegradable.

Q. Is it really important to know the difference?
A. Yes - NABAS recommends releasing only hand tied latex balloons for balloon releases. It is also important to know that latex balloons are not made of plastic.

Latex balloons

- They biodegrade in about the same time as an oak leaf and are the only balloons that are used in balloon releases.
- Latex balloon releases conducted by professional balloon artists are not harmful to the environment.
- Biodegradable latex balloons are used exclusively by professionals and are released without strings, clips, discs, ribbons or any other objects.
- The exception to the rule is the use of card for competition releases. These cards are designed to decompose if not found and returned as part of the competition.
- Without the added weight of cards, latex balloons rise high into the atmosphere where 90% of them 'brittle' fracture and fall harmlessly back to earth in tiny shattered fragments.
- Stray balloons that have been found on beaches are always found with some object attached, even as simple as a ribbon. Most often, the balloons found are a mixture of latex and foil tied in a cluster that have been accidentally released or set adrift by careless customer handling.
- A professional balloon artist would attach a weight to all helium filled balloons not intended for release. This prevents any balloons from becoming stray unless, as is most often the case, The CONSUMER releases the balloon.
- Balloons DO NOT kill animals. Although the reverse has been widely reported as fact in newspapers across our country, factual evidence proves otherwise.
- The fact is, after many years, researchers have been unable to locate a single study supporting the claim that latex balloons can kill wildlife. Animal activists making the claim have refused to supply representatives from the balloon industry with any documented proof.
- A latex balloon is an outstanding example of an environmentally responsible product. Not only is it biodegradable, but latex production requires the continuance of a vast rain forest and thriving trees. Unlike the process for manufacturing paper products, where trees are cut down and harvested, latex is derived by harvesting the running sap from the rubber tree. By supporting the manufacturer of latex products, consumers promote conservation of the great tropical rain forests and furthermore, promote the expansion of forestation.

Foil balloons

- Being made from metal coated plastic, foil balloons do not biodegrade and should not be released
- Having a metal coating, foils will conduct electricity and as such present a threat to life and electrical supplies if released and caught in distribution conductors etc

Bubble balloons

- Are formed from a stretchy plastic that does not biodegrade and should not be released
- Being of a superior construction to foil balloons and requiring much higher pressure of helium to inflate them, they will reach much higher altitudes if released into the atmosphere and could become a hazard to aircraft

HELIUM BALLOON GAS

a) Helium balloon gas is a gas that is lighter than air and is safe to use with balloons. It is an inert gas, which means it is non-toxic, non-flammable, odourless and colourless. Helium balloon gas is however stored in highly pressurised containers, which should be handled with appropriate care and attention at all times.

b) Balloon gas comes in a variety of cylinder sizes. When full, the pressure in a small cylinder is the same as that in a large one. Cylinders should always be stored upright and secured in a well-ventilated area.

c) Never use any other gas than helium balloon gas to make your balloons float. Care should be taken at all times when transporting, storing or using gas cylinders.

d) **Never under any circumstances inhale, or allow anyone to inhale helium balloon gas. Compressed gases, of which helium balloon gas is one, when breathed in high concentrations may cause asphyxiation. Breathing 100% helium balloon gas will produce unconsciousness and DEATH due to lack of oxygen**.

Balloon Hazard Warning

There is a legal obligation since 1998 to print a safety warning on ALL balloon packaging. The responsibility lies with the person who last packaged the balloons or re-packaged them. NABAS also recommends that the following is clearly displayed at point of sale or even printed and given to your customers:

SAFETY WARNING

- **It is possible to choke or be suffocated by an un-inflated balloon or piece of burst balloon.**
- **Inhaling helium is dangerous and can result in asphyxiation.**
- **Children under the age of eight [8] years with balloons should be supervised at all times.**
- **Always use a hand pump [or similar] to inflate balloons**
- **Adults should inflate balloons for children under the age of [8] years**
- **Never put a balloon, or piece of a balloon, in or near the mouth**
- **Inhaling helium can cause dizziness, nausea, vomiting loss of consciousness and death**
- **Under no circumstances inhale helium from a balloon or helium tank**
- **Always discard broken balloons safely**
- **When handled responsibly balloons pose no threat to health, wildlife or the environment**

Your Company Name *cannot be held responsible for any accident or injury following the mis-use of balloons.*