



Balloon Fiesta Officials Announce 2020 Event Postponement

49th Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta to take place October 2-10, 2021

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Albuquerque, NM – Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta board of directors announced Monday, June 22, that the 49th Balloon Fiesta, set to take place October 3-11 2020, will be postponed. The 49th event is set to take place in 2021, October 2-10.

The Balloon Fiesta’s volunteer board of directors and 20-person staff have brainstormed many different ways to make the 49th event occur this October. Various contingency plans and approaches were explored but ultimately the organization decided postponing is the safest option at this point. “The safety of our pilots, guests, sponsors, staff and volunteers has always been our top concern and in the wake of COVID-19 and its continued impacts, we must stay dedicated to upholding that commitment,” said Matt W. Guthrie, President, Balloon Fiesta Board of Directors.

Guest reservations, tickets and RV spaces will be unchanged and can be used for the 2021 event. Guests seeking a refund or wishing to donate their tickets may do so at www.balloonfiesta.com. “Keeping existing tickets and reservations is one of the best ways our guests can continue to support us as we navigate this challenging time,” said Guthrie.

Balloon Fiesta is a New Mexico staple and internationally recognized event. In 2019, the event attracted an estimated 866,414 guest-visits over nine days and a total estimated economic impact on Metro-Albuquerque’s business volume of \$186.82 million. The government revenue attributable to 2019 Balloon Fiesta is estimated to be \$6.52 million for the state of New Mexico; \$4.09 million for the City of Albuquerque, and \$1.44 million for Bernalillo County.

For nearly 50 years, the event has been filling New Mexico skies with hot air and gas balloons, this will be the first year since 1972 that a Balloon Fiesta will not be held. While the process for this decision has been thoughtful and extensive, ultimately the following factors most contributed to our decision:

- **Health & Safety:** Like the rest of the world, we are hopeful that the effects of COVID-19 will diminish. However, without a clear understanding of the status of this virus or the applicable New Mexico Public Health Order this October, we can't proceed with plans that could put anyone working at or attending Balloon Fiesta at risk.
- **Financial Responsibility:** The Balloon Fiesta is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, led by 24 volunteer board members and a year-round staff of 20. This year we were prepared to host more than 600 pilots, facilitate 1,657 RV reservations, coordinate with hundreds of sponsors, support more than a thousand volunteers, order 230,000 pieces of merchandise, as well as work with entertainers and concessionaires; it's an extensive process that requires a lot of planning. If we were to move forward with these steps, and in the end not be able to have an event in October, it would put the event and organization in a very vulnerable position.

"We are proud of the event Balloon Fiesta has grown into over the years. We know that there is an entire community, city and state invested in its success, making this the most difficult decision we've ever faced as an organization," said Guthrie. "This is certainly a setback, but we will remain committed to making this the best and brightest event in the world and can't wait to see Balloon Fiesta Park once again filled with balloons and smiling faces."

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