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## Hot Air Balloon Collides with Bristol School Roof During International Festival

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A hot air balloon struck the roof of a primary school in Bristol during the opening day of the Bristol International Balloon Fiesta, Europe's largest hot air balloon festival. The

incident occurred at approximately 7:11 a.m. on Friday when the balloon descended at a dangerously low altitude before clipping the roof of Oasis Academy Connaught, close to a designated landing site.

Video footage captured the balloon basket tilting sharply as the pilot attempted to regain altitude. Witness Stephanie, 22, who filmed the moment, told local media: “I thought that one looked a bit low and pressed record. The basket was tilting; it looked like they were going to fall out. It must have been scary.” Despite the near miss, the balloon managed to recover and continued its flight without reported injuries.

The Bristol International Balloon Fiesta draws hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and marks its 47th anniversary in 2025. The free event runs from Friday, 8 August to Sunday, 10 August, featuring mass ascents at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., night-glow displays, and family entertainment. The festival regularly attracts pilots from around the world, with hundreds of balloons in various shapes and sizes taking to the skies.

On Friday morning, crowds cheered as green smoke signalled the start of the first of five planned mass ascents. Balloons drifted east and southeast across the city towards Keynsham and Hanham.

The incident in Bristol comes just weeks after a fatal hot air balloon accident in Brazil in June, which claimed eight lives. The crash occurred in Praia Grande, in the southern Brazilian state of Santa Catarina, a popular destination for balloon tourism. The craft, carrying 21 people including the pilot, caught fire mid-air before the passenger basket detached and fell to the ground. Local fire officials confirmed that 13 passengers survived and were taken to the hospital. The pilot stated the fire may have been caused by a blowtorch in the basket.

While the Bristol collision resulted in no injuries, the Brazilian tragedy has renewed discussions among aviation authorities and event organisers worldwide about balloon safety, particularly at large-scale public gatherings.