

August 3, 2020

N.J.'s giant hot air balloon festival cancelled because of the coronavirus



Scenes from the 37th annual QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning on Friday, July 26, 2019. (Kathy Turpin | for NJ Advance Media)

By Katie Kausch | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

The 38th annual New Jersey hot air balloon festival has been cancelled for 2020 because of ongoing coronavirus restrictions, event organizers said on Monday.

Originally pushed back from July to October, the New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning in Association with PNC Bank will now take place the weekend of July 24, 2021, at the Solberg Airport in Readington Township.

This is the first year the festival will not take place since 1983.

“We hoped that when we decided in the spring to move this year’s festival from July to mid-October, the festival would provide a welcome relief and help us heal from this crisis,” said Festival Executive Producer Howard Freeman. “But at this point, there are too many variables out of our control and we must remain steadfast in upholding our commitment to safety first.”

In addition to health concerns, organizers cited current crowd size restrictions as a key reason for cancelling the 2020 dates. Outdoor crowds must currently be limited to no more than 500 people and the annual three-day event draws crowds of over 165,000 attendees.

Tickets will be valid for the 2021 festival. Refund and exchange options will be emailed to ticket holders on Tuesday, organizers said.

“We will now move ahead with planning next year’s festival in its normal summer time slot and looking forward to brighter skies ahead when our community and all of our balloonic friends can safely be together,” said Freeman.